FROM PREYING TO PRAYING: EXPOSING
THE EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE
IN THE CHURCH

Agnes M. Lover

Xavier University of Louisiana, 1986
MDiv, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, 2005

Mentor

Elvin Sadler, DMin

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Date: _____

Approved:

_____

_____
Faculty Mentor:

_____
Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies:

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ABSTRACT

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The context was a church in central Alabama. The purpose of the research was to

establish a psycho-ecclesial model to educate participants on spiritual abuse. During the

project, four sessions were conducted, which included writing a spiritual narrative,

educating participants on spiritual abuse, discussing traits of healthy congregations and

conflict resolution and understanding spiritual abuse recovery. The ministry model used

included Bible study, video, breakout sessions, role-playing, group discussions and

individual assessments. The hypothesis of the project is that a psycho-ecclesial model

will help leadership to understand the negative effects of spiritual abuse and assist in

restoring a healthy congregation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Last but certainly not least, a huge shout out to ALL my family – my rock. Thanks to my mom, Rosa Lover-Patterson, who prays for her baby girl; my son and daughter-in-love, Kevion and Jillian Rogers, for allowing me to witness authentic love; and my daughter, Dr. Gimel Rogers, who wants to take this show on the road! Blessings …..

DEDICATION

       To Victims of Abuse: Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours (Isaiah 61:7 NLT).

TABLES

INTRODUCTION

As a result of my experience of intimate partner violence and spiritual abuse, I can identify with the brokenness and lack of trust that exist within the congregation. The struggle for power and control within the church polarizes members and often drive some to leave. Some members are critical of the involvement and ministry contribution of others. Anonymous letters have been written to air complaints. Remaining anonymous maybe perceived as cowardly and equivalent to throwing a rock and hiding a hand. Regardless of form, the behavior is abuse.

Abusive behavior has limited some members' willingness to get involve and serve in the church. If the spiritual abuse is not addressed it will be to the detriment of the congregation. If the leadership is sensitized to spiritual abuse and has a willingness to change, perhaps the spiritual health of the church may improve. It has been determined that the church would benefit from a psycho-ecclesial program. The psycho-ecclesial program will help leadership understand spiritual abuse and evaluate the negative effects of spiritual abuse. Psychologist Lenore Walker defined a Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP), which is a psychoeducation program for women who

suffered intimate partner violence.[1] Spiritual abuse closely mirrors intimate partner violence therefore certain STEPs are adaptable to spiritual abuse.

The following STEPs were redefined and adapted to the "psycho-ecclesial" model: STEP One, Definition of Spiritual Abuse; STEP Six, Three types of violence: structural, symbolic, and direct; STEP Eight, Grieving the End of a Relationship; and STEP Eleven, Building Healthy Congregation Relationships. STEP One, Six, Eight and Eleven were discussed in the different sessions. To maintain the integrity of Lenore Walker's psychoeducational STEP model, each session had an education, discussion, and a skill component. This project aimed to help participants have a better knowledge of spiritual abuse, engage in healthier conflict interaction and explore different spiritual abuse recovery aids. The following chapters provide the foundational support for the psycho-ecclesial model.

Chapter One gives a summary of my ministry context and education and professional experience. It provides a convergent of the ministry context needs and my skills. The need for spiritual formation is presented. Spiritual formation rituals help the church become healthier. The need for the psycho-ecclesial model is also introduced.

Chapter Two provides the biblical foundation for exploring spiritual abuse and healthy church congregations. This chapter identifies biblical examples of spiritual abuse as found in Jeremiah and presents a shepherd – sheep model of leadership as described in First Peter. In the Jeremiah pericope, God's formal accusation includes: abuse of spiritual authority, covetousness, deceitfulness, and triangulation. First Peter models the

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[1] Lenore E. A. Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2009), accessed January 04, 2016, http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

behavior of how a shepherd cares and protects the sheep, just as church leadership should care and protect the people entrusted in their ministry. The exegetical work in both the Old and New Testament scripture provides a foundation for the psych-ecclesial model.

Chapter Three provides the historical foundation. Spiritual abuse is not a new phenomenon and historically oppressive behavior among clergy and church members is a factor that led to factions and divisions in the church. This chapter explores the persecutions of Christians in the early church, provide an overview of John Wesley and American Methodism's views on slavery, and examine how the African Methodist Episcopal A.M.E. Church was birthed out of racial oppression in the eighteenth century. This chapter also highlights how the A.M.E. Church oppressed women in ministry, assimilated their clergy to the dominant culture, stereotyped the model male clergy, and instituted the Minister's Bill of rights to protect clergy and their families in pastoral assignments.

Chapter Four provides the theological framework for the psycho-ecclesial model in identifying spiritual abuse as sin. Spiritual abuse is a broken relationship between the victim and the oppressor. The broken relationship may be construed as sin. This chapter briefly highlights retribution theology and process theology as a response to spiritual abuse, however minjung theology is presented in greater detail because it challenges the victim to forgive the oppressor as a means to healing.

Chapter Five provides the theoretical framework for spiritual abuse. Intimate partner violence is similar to spiritual abuse. In both instances, the abuse is coming from a trusted source that should provide security and stability rather than violent manipulative control techniques. This chapter presents recent findings of the foremost authorities on

spiritual abuse researched by David Henke, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen. This chapter also evaluates the intimate partner violence model and the Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP) program defined by Psychologist Lenore Walker.

Chapter Six provides the outcome of implementing the psycho-ecclesial model. In this chapter, I discuss what happened and how effective the therapeutic model was as an intervention technique based on disseminating information and learning new skills. The methodology, project implementation, data collection analysis and triangulation of the data are presented. The chapter concludes with the researcher candidly discussing the limitations of the psycho-ecclesial model and a personal ministry reflection is given.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Ward Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) was organized in 1844 in Prattville, Alabama. Historically, Ward Chapel was the leading church in their conference, but in recent years the church is on the decline. Ward Chapel's biggest strength is the membership love of their local church. Worship is very spirited and the music ministry is dynamic. The location of the church is also an advantage point. Ward Chapel also boasts of a very strong men's ministry that has monthly prayer breakfasts. The church continues to host annual conferences, district meetings and minister training sessions due to its size and location. However, the church's membership, ministries, finances, and overall morale are steadily declining. There is a group of members that have consistently stepped in when the church encountered financially difficulty. However, their financial efforts are independent of Ward Chapel's Commission on Finance and they are reluctant to put their monies in church. There is apathy among the members and a general distrust of pastors and each other. Initially, it was thought this demeanor is contributed to the constant churn in pastors.

In the last fifteen years, Ward Chapel had seven pastors and four of them within the last five years. However, the members are abusive towards each other. There is abusive behavior from the 'least to the greatest.' This chapter will summarize the

church's needs, provide an overview of the current pastor's education and professional development, and identify were the two overlap.

Summation of Ward Chapel Assessment

Despite all the current spiritual and financial needs, Ward Chapel is poised to make an impact in ministry. The ministry infrastructure is in place. The physical plant is less than twenty years old and can sustain growth and the church is in one of the fastest growing cities in the state of Alabama. Ward Chapel has not reaped the benefits of the population growth. There has been attrition in local church membership that is reflected in the church's overall income. The church is comprised of skilled blue collar, professionals and retirees. Many are employed by the car and chemical manufacturing industries, the state of Alabama, the school system and service jobs. Finances are an issue in the church because money is used to posture and control. The church has also suffered from lack of stability and consistency in pastoral leadership, which has led to a power struggle between laity and clergy instead of a teaming approach to ministry.

The pastor needs to develop trust and build creditability among the congregation. The pastoral position at Ward Chapel needs to be more than a rubber stamp to move to the next church or promotion. The congregation needs to know that the pastor is vested in their lives and the success of the church. There is also a strong lack of trust among the members and a power struggle between families in the church.

A letter was recently written on behalf of concerned members of the church who chose to remain anonymous. The letter had an accusation and a threat. A family is accused of receiving preferential treatment in the church and the concerned members are

not going to tolerate it. The accused family is lifelong members spanning three generations, which is the norm in the church. Ward Chapel is a family church, so one disgruntled member has a rippling effect in the entire congregation. Over the years, several members have left and prior to the current leadership there was a substantial decrease in giving. The church's mortgage, utilities and payroll were several months behind. A balloon payment on the church's mortgage was due in four months and refinancing looked bleak due to the limited payments in the past.

The Commission on Finance needs to regain the trust of the membership. Several members believe that the congregation and the finances have been abused by previous administrations. There needs to be a greater degree of transparency of financial transactions. Strong stewardship practices need implementing with clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the Commission on Finance members. The role of Commission on Finance chairperson, financial secretary, treasurer, and payment authorizations require immediate assignment. The former financial secretary has even accused members of the steward board of being incompetent and incapable of understanding financial statements. The real implication is they should not be stewards. The verbal attacks and even the written letter are mean spirited.

Before Ward Chapel can move forward, there needs to be an honest self-assessment of the local church. A contextual analysis of the local church led by the church officers and members would prove beneficial. The contextual analysis would provide an opportunity for the congregation to take a realistic look at the church. It also gives ownership of the process to the membership so they take ownership of the problem and recommended solution. The contextual analysis will be beneficial only if it is an

honest inquiry. Some of Ward Chapel's needs perhaps stem from the misappropriation of pastor itinerancy.

In the A.M.E. Church, pastors are assigned annually. Typically, the first year is a period of acquaintance and the real work often starts during the second year. The pastor has well defined spiritual and temporal responsibility in the local church, however these roles and responsibility are difficult to assume from laity when there is constant churn in pastors at a local church. In the previous administration, the connectional budget was not paid as leverage to have the outgoing pastor removed. As a result, some key officers were not reappointed as stewards nor elected as trustees. However, it will be naïve to diminish their influence in the church. The challenge is to restore trust and renew fellowship among the membership. A season of spiritual preparation, i.e. repentance and reconciliation are greatly needed.

Summation of Pastor's Education and Professional Development

Prior to pursuing fulltime ministry, I was a wireless Account Executive with a Fortune 500 company. My corporate career evolved around twenty-four years of telecommunication experience combined in systems engineering, project management, sales and marketing. In these assignments, I interfaced with individuals from various cultural and varying levels of professionalism. I had to develop people skills to effectively interface with management, clients and technical staff to get the job done. These assignments required major flexibility and adaptability. Prior to obtaining my Masters of Divinity, a Masters of Business Administration and Masters of Computer Science were received. These combined academic degrees provide general management

skills to manage the church's plant, however ministry at Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church shaped my professional development in ministry.

I served in ministry at Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church in Marietta, Georgia for nearly a decade. The ministry has 6000 plus members and although it is A.M.E., it is modeled after Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church*. While at Turner Chapel, I served as the Purpose Head for Worship, Fellowship and Discipleship, and served on the Evangelism ministry. As the Worship Pastor (Worship Purpose Head), I was responsible for administration of all worship ministries and tasked with facilitating all corporate worship services. Prior to this assignment, I gave leadership to Turner Chapel's Discipleship Ministry whose task was to facilitate the spiritual growth of every member of the church moving from new birth to maturity in Christ. As the Minister of Fellowship, I managed twenty ministry leaders whose primary purpose was to connect Turner's 6000+ members one to another. My past ministry roles at Turner Chapel also include: Co-Director of Vacation Bible School, Chairperson of Worship Committee and Living Single Ministry. While at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, I served as a student chaplain at Carpenter's House, a male Drug Rehabilitation Center. While serving as chaplain, I became aware and sensitive to the needs of the marginalized. This led to enrollment and completion of United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta V.I.P. Board Training program that prepares persons for leadership roles in nonprofit agencies. These combined experiences will help Ward Chapel at a future date, but the most immediate need is pastoral care and financial stability.

In my spiritual autobiography, I candidly talk about past abusive relationships. I was in a hostile marriage, which legally ended in annulment; my children were split for a

season so I understand the separation of family; and I know church leadership abuse and isolation first hand. As a pastor, I felt prepared from an academic and administrative perspective for church leadership, but was not prepared for the politics of being part of a connectional organization. My biggest struggle with the church is the requirement for a learned, theologically trained pulpit and then superiors treat clergy administratively as morons. The dictator style of leadership is simply shocking especially after being exposed to working within a team concept for decades where each individual's contribution are sought after and valued.

It is difficult to remain faithful during adversity, brokenness, and betrayal. Frankly, that is what is being asked of Ward Chapel's membership. They are being asked to trust yet a new leader and remain faithful despite a church history of adversity, brokenness, and betrayal. The lack of trust has eroded and cast a shadow on the role of shepherd and its sheep at Ward Chapel. The Twenty-Third Psalm so beautifully explains the role of the shepherd to its sheep. The shepherd leads the sheep and the sheep may not have common sense to lead itself, however the sheep has enough common sense to know the shepherd. The contention is that too many sheep have assumed the role of shepherd and therefore are unwilling to relinquish that role. This always leads to a power struggle and an unhealthy jockeying for position.

Convergent of Ward Chapel's Needs and Pastor's Skills

I received the pastoral appointment to Ward Chapel on November 14, 2014, three weeks after the passing of my ninety-nine-year old step-father. My prior ministerial assignment is three hours from my home in Montgomery, and now Ward Chapel is

merely twenty minutes away. There is a strong desire for this new assignment to be successful and have longevity. My acquired people and business skills will permit interaction with the church and community to cast a vision for ministry. Before the vision is cast, there needs to be a new church start mentality. Ward Chapel was organized in 1844 and with the recent constant changes in leadership, pastors and church officers, and with the departure of members Ward Chapel must transform or continue to go through a painful demise.

There is great receptivity for things to get better. There is more than excitement of having a new pastor. Admittedly I am the first female pastor in this church's history. However, this is the third charge in which I have been the first female pastor and the second historical church I have pastored. Initially gender was a concern of a few and perhaps remains a concern, but amid raw pain, anger, and lack of forgiveness there is a remnant that wants Ward Chapel to thrive again. In moving forward, the internal hemorrhaging must stop first, and Ward Chapel needs pastoral care, spiritual formation, stewardship, and church leadership training. Once these building blocks are in place, the church will be poised for growth.

The pastor and the members should work together to build relationship and fellowship. Presently, the members are broken and need healing. Many feel that previous pastors have also abused the church financially and there is a lack of trust not only of the clergy but there is a strong divide among the members. The membership needs nurturing and a lot of patience is required. A spirit of compromise and cooperation must be forged. The pastor's availability and accessibility is paramount. Partnership in ministry needs to be restored.

As the pastor, I am a proponent for ongoing self-care. I am benefiting from therapeutic sessions with a licensed counselor, working out with a physical trainer three to four times a week and becoming more intentional in my devotional time. Since pastoring Ward Chapel my stress level has become manageable and my quality of life has drastically improve subsequently making me a more effective pastor.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation needs to be a key component in every aspect of ministry. Christian rituals such as prayer meetings and fasting need to be encouraged. An effort should be taken to match spiritual gifts to ministry opportunities so more members can feel connected to the church and become involved. A connection to the church needs to be established outside of Sunday morning worship. Once the members have a sense of belonging then their respective ministries will become one of service to the Lord and not viewed as being volunteers. Spiritual formation will help the church become healthy. A healthy church will provide a foundation for continued growth and greater ministry opportunity.

Faithfulness in stewardship as part of spiritual formation needs to be taught. A deeper understanding of giving unto God and not unto man needs to be stressed. The level of giving had declined to a point where the church was struggling to meet plant commitment and general budget requirements. Although bills were being paid by individuals the church will become stronger when the funds are pooled together. The church also would benefit from a diverse income stream. It would be beneficial for the

trustees to repair a house the church owns and rent it out. A strong annual fundraiser would also boost the treasurer.

Leadership Development is needed for all those interested in leadership positions. The pastor should work with each ministry leader to identify goals for their respective ministry. This approach should not be used to intimidate the leaders but as a necessary step to create partnership. Establishing goals for the conference year may be used as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of ministry. In addition, a review of basic Methodism and how the local church is structured will prove helpful among leadership. When leaders have a strong understanding of the local and connectional church structure it helps when it comes to meeting connectional budget and obligations outside the local church.

A campaign to encourage members who have left Ward Chapel should be carefully thought out and implemented. Sheep beget sheep. It is going to take the members of Ward Chapel to encourage members to come back. Evangelism should be a long-term goal. To encourage church growth, a strategic and well thought out evangelism plan needs to be implemented. Although this is not a number one priority, it is needful.

Doctor of Ministry Project

At Ward Chapel, both the clergy and the membership have engaged in unhealthy and abusive relationships. Finger pointing is in both directions. According to the A.M.E. Discipline, the pastor has well defined spiritual and temporal responsibility in the local church. These roles and responsibility are difficult to assume from laity when there is constant churn in pastors at a local church. There are instances where the pastor is relegated to merely preaching, teaching Bible study and visiting the sick, while the laity

manages the business affairs. This can create a tense environment when the pastor is held accountable by superiors for all plant concerns of the church. It becomes rather difficult to garner the trust of the congregation, and raise enough funds to meet payroll, plant and connectional budget obligations. The situation becomes stressful for all parties involved.

When this stress is not managed appropriately, it may create a hostile environment and abusive behavior may result. Though the abuse may not be physical and violent in nature, the effects are just as harmful. It can be argued that the abuse is even more harmful because it is happening in a spiritual context that should be an environment that indoctrinates the love of Jesus. Ward Chapel would benefit from a model that educates church leaders and members on spiritual abuse. Writing anonymous threatening letters, disrespecting pastors and members, withholding money, turning off utilities, and concentrating power and leadership positions to a select few are all characteristics of abuse. Church leadership education on spiritual abuse would be a necessary step to prevention. The education on spiritual abuse would also address the pastoral care, spiritual formation, stewardship, and leadership training needs.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The disappointing truth is that some ordained clergy and church leaders are participating in spiritual abuse. Similar to the false prophets that Jeremiah encountered, some clergy and church leaders are advancing their agenda and are driven by their own motives that do not align with God's command. God commanded throughout the Old and New Testament to care for the marginalized of society that is the stranger, poor, widow, and orphan. As Christians, we are also commanded to do good to everyone, "especially to those in the household of faith," (Gal. 6:10). Instead of being a place of healing, some churches are reducing themselves to social and saving clubs, and there is a misuse of power and authority to enforce compliance. Often members model the behavior they witness in church leadership, and as a result an unhealthy and unholy atmosphere arises, resulting in spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse boils down to a misuse of spiritual authority. The misuse of authority maybe by clergy, church leaders, and even church membership, that is from the least to the greatest. The victims of spiritual abuse become confused because the very entity that promises healing and restoration has betrayed their sacred trust. "Spiritual abuse occurs when an authority figure causes harm to a person in the name of God or a faith community, thereby diminishing that person's

sense of self. Spiritual abuse crosses religious boundaries and may be subtle or overt, mild or traumatic."[1]

The loss is devastating and often unrecoverable. The victims of spiritual abuse either stay and conform or perhaps leave and stray from the body of Christ altogether. "Individuals who have experienced unhealthy religion likely have multiple layers of loss, which may manifest as loss of physical and emotional health, loss of innocence, loss of trust, loss of world view, loss of relationships - including a perceived loss of relationship with God - and loss of self."[2] This chapter identifies biblical examples of spiritual abuse as found in Jeremiah and also presents a shepherd – sheep model of leadership as described in 1 Peter.

In Jeremiah 6:13-15, God brings an indictment against the false prophets, priests, and the least to the greatest who are participating in spiritual abuse. God has a covenant relationship with Israel and the sacred trust has been broken. In the Jeremiah pericope, God's indictment includes: abuse of spiritual authority, covetousness, deceitfulness, and triangulation. In addition, the theological implication of false prophets is also explored. Furthermore, the Jeremiah texts indicate unacceptable church leadership behavior, and on the contrary, 1 Peter defines an accountability behavioral model for church leadership.

In 1 Peter 5:1- 5, the shepherd – sheep model introduces a model of behavior and not a hierarchical structure. Inherent in a hierarchical structure are politics, and politics in the church often lead to a compromise of spiritual authority which breeds abusive

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[1] Melanie Childers, "Holy Havoc: Chaplains as First Responders in Healing Spiritual Abuse," *Chaplaincy Today (Online)* 28, no. 2 (September 1, 2012): 37, accessed March 7, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[2] Childers, "Holy Havoc," 41.

behavior to enforce compliance. On the contrary, Peter models the behavior of how a shepherd cares and protects the sheep, just as church leadership should care and protect the people entrusted in their ministry. This chapter will examine Peter's leadership message and how the roles of elder and lay are reflective of the shepherd-sheep model; identify who are the elders Peter is referencing; and the shepherd-sheep imagery consistently found throughout the Old and New Testament. In addition, the Chief Shepherd model is defined and the section concludes with rethinking shepherding God's flock as spiritual work and not a career for mere social and material gain. Of particular note, the concluding analysis serves as a spring board to the foundation for increasing the knowledge and recognizing the signs of spiritual abuse amongst the body of Christ.

Old Testament

The first ten verses in the first chapter of Jeremiah introduce historically who Jeremiah is, the time frame of his ministry and the call of God on Jeremiah's life. From birth, Jeremiah is set apart to be a "prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). Jeremiah is commanded to go, speak, and act courageous to a people in desperate need of a spiritual revival. In Jeremiah, it is apparent that beyond idolatry, Israel is actively participating in spiritual abuse. The spiritual abuse is not limited to those in priestly or prophetic authority but it is inclusive of the least to the greatest. Essentially, God's covenant people are engaging in unholy and unhealthy relationships. Therefore, God commands Jeremiah to speak truth to power, and he speaks truth in the focus text, Jeremiah 6:13-15, which sums up God's indictment:

> For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
> and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the

wound of my people carelessly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord. [3]

The preceding text is extracted from a poem.[4] Jeremiah contains several poems, and "each poem illustrates a different aspect of a theme, and there is development of thought from one poem to the next."[5]

The first group of poems spans Jeremiah 2:1 through 6:30 and is given the theme "the choice for a rebellious people; repentance or judgment."[6] This first group of poem speaks to Israel's apostasy and in Jeremiah 6:9-15 "their corruption is total."[7] The selected text, Jeremiah 6:13-15, is specifically being read through the lens of spiritual abuse. An initial read indicates that all are participating in abusive behavior. It is spiritual abuse because it is happening in the context of God's chosen people, Israel. The Decalogue clearly says thou shalt not covet (Ex. 20:17), but has coveting become an acceptable social norm (v. 13)? Since the prophets and priest are practicing deception (v. 13), is there a consciousness of how their behavior is affecting God's people? Are God's people being ministered to as an afterthought, if their wounds are being tended to trivially (v. 14)? Since Jeremiah is calling the behavior of all into question, is there any remorse (v. 15)?

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[3] Biblical citations within this document are from the New Revised Standard Version unless stated otherwise.

[4] Robert M. Paterson, "Repentance or Judgment: The Construction and Purpose of Jeremiah 2-6," *Expository Times* 96, no. 7 (April 1, 1985): 199, accessed March 2, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database*, EBSCO*host*.

[5] Paterson, "Repentance of Judgment," 199.

[6] Paterson, "Repentance of Judgment," 199.

[7] Paterson, "Repentance of Judgment," 201.

Historically in Exodus 22:21-24 and Deuteronomy 27:19, God warns of his anger against those who imposed injustice toward the widows and the orphans and the aliens. It is an expected behavior that Israel is the voice for the least and marginalized and Israel upholds their rights. Israel is in covenant with God and in covenant with one another. This is why the offenses are not merely misdemeanors but are a direct violation of sacred trust. Recall at Mount Sinai the dialogue between Moses and God when the covenant with Israel was being established as documented in Exodus 19:3-6:

> Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

It is important to reference God's covenant relationship with Israel so that God's anger and the seriousness of the indictments are appreciated. Yahweh is Israel's God and Israel is God's chosen people. Israel is characterized as God's treasured possession and priestly kingdom, however they are not obeying God's voice nor keeping the covenant. A priestly kingdom is holy and set apart and sets the standard for spiritual behavior for others. The covenant relationship between God and Israel is conditional and the covenant is broken.

God's Indictment

Jeremiah 5:26-31 sums up God's indictment against Israel. Israel is full of wicked men who are deceitful. They are rich and powerful and there are no boundaries to their evilness. God's covenant people are not helping the marginalized and those living on the fringes of society. God's spiritual leaders, prophets and priests, carry out their spiritual

duties on their own authority. The sad truth is God's covenant people do not see anything wrong with their behavior. God's indictment includes abuse of spiritual authority, covetousness, and deceit.

In Jeremiah 2:8-9, the spiritual leaders are accused of rebellious behavior. The prophets are not consulting the Lord, but rather are consulting and prophesying by the false god Baal. This behavior is an abomination, for God declared in the first of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3, "you shall have no other gods before me." The prophets are acting in their own authority independent of God. Similarly, when there is no accountability and when spiritual leaders are left to their own vices, an authoritarian form of leadership emerges. This form of leadership lends to spiritual abuse, and once the spiritual abuse has been surfaced, it is difficult for the congregation to rebound from the stigma. Spiritual abuse when not addressed has a tendency to affect generations to come. God promises to bring generational charges (Jeremiah 2:9) and therefore, the broken relationship has a rippling effect.

In the text, the prophets and priests have been careless in their pastoral care duties. They are accused of putting a mere bandage on the wounds of God's people. Jeremiah 6:14 states "they have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace." The Hebrew word for the wounds and the brokenness of God's people is *"sheber"* which is defined as "breaking, fracture, crushing, breach, crash, ruin, shattering."[8] Furthermore, the Hebrew word for carelessly or superficially is "*qalal*," which is defined as "to be slight, be swift, be trifling, be of

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[8] Francis Brown et al., "The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Sheber," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/sheber.html.

little account, be light."[9] When these two words, *"sheber"* and *"qalal,"* are considered

together, the implications is that the people's wounds were so great but the priest and

prophet merely glossed over them. The remedy or the balm to heal the wound was to

declare peace, *"shalom,"* but no substantive action to bring about peace was taken.[10]

Perhaps the spiritual leaders were reluctant to address any controversial issue, in order to

remain popular or in good standing. Commonly, this is witnessed in some churches

today. For example, "the abuse of power in the church happens when church leaders use

their authority, their religiously legitimated power, to harm, control, demean, or subjugate

another's spirit."[11] However, spiritual abuse also occurs when sin is not confronted

directly but rather glossed over. When bad behavior is not questioned, then it becomes an

acceptable norm. Anderson argues,

> Jeremiah's greatest adversaries were the popular prophets who promised a
> shortcut to divine restoration without going through the valley of judgment. Like
> spiritual quacks, these prophets cried "peace, peace" when there was not peace
> and tried to "heal the wound of the people lightly" by remedies that did not touch
> the root of the trouble (Jer. 6:13-15).[12]

Are these prophets truly messengers of God with a watered down message or are they

truly called of God and their worldly values have superseded their priestly authority?

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[9] Francis Brown et al., "The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Qalal," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/qalal.html.

[10] Francis Brown et al., "The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Shalowm," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/shalowm.html.

[11] Lauree Hersch Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority: A Believer's Church Perspective," *Brethren Life and Thought* 38, no. 2 (March 1, 1993): 80, accessed March 2, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[12] Bernhard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1998), 357.

The legitimacy of the prophets being messengers of God comes into question. Their

actions warrant them title of false prophets. False prophets practice deceit (Jeremiah

6:13), and are an abomination to God. The Hebrew word for abomination is *"tow`ebah,"*

which is defined as "a disgusting thing."[13] In essence they acted disgustingly in the eyes

of God and their behavior was arrogant and cocky and the false prophets had no shame.

The Bible declares they did not even blush and were not remorseful about their behavior

(Jer. 6:15).

> The fullest discussion of charges that could be brought against false prophets can
> be found in Jeremiah 23:9-39. Jeremiah condemns the pseudoprophets on four
> grounds: (1) they are men of immoral character (v. 14 "they commit adultery and
> live a lie"); (2) they seek popular acclaim with their unconditional pledge of
> immunity from all imminent disasters (vv. 17-22); (3) they fail to distinguish their
> own dreams from a word from God (vv. 25-29); and (4) they are plagiarists who
> steal from one another words allegedly from the Lord (vv. 30-39). Rather than
> having a "burden" from the Lord, they themselves were another burden both to
> the Lord and to the misled people![14]

"The false prophets are dismissed as primarily "feel-good" messengers who could not

possibly be from Yahweh (6:14, 8:11)."[15] Perhaps it was safer to be a false prophet for

Jeremiah faced persecution and abandonment from the ones he ministered to. "For

Jeremiah and so many, these false prophets seem only to make attempts at drowning out

the voice of God presented through Jeremiah, because the people did not want to hear

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[13] Francis Brown et al., "The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Tow`ebah," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/towebah.html.

[14] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/false-prophet.html.

[15] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of Old Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 631.

real Truth!"[16] Therefore the prophets only spoke what itchy ears wanted to hear. Perhaps

church leaders today only teach and rebuke what the congregation will tolerate.

Second Timothy 4:3-4 states, "For the time is coming when people will not put up

with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves

teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and

wander away to myths." The existing leadership only numbed the community, and only

served to keep peace through compromise.[17] The prophets and priests abused their

spiritual authority but they also coveted.

In Jeremiah 6:13 New International Version of the Bible (NIV), the people are

accused of being greedy for gain. The New Revised Standard Version translation adds the

people were greedy for unjust gain, and the King James Version (KJV) provides a

stronger image by labeling their actions as covetousness. In the context of Jeremiah 6:13,

covetousness, Hebrew word "*betsa*," is defined as: "profit, unjust gain, gain (profit)

acquired by violence."[18] Covetousness or unjust greedy gain is sin. Edwin Hostetter

suggests that confiscation, fraud and injustice is a form of white-collar crime and it is

violent in nature because it is an abuse of power.[19] Covetousness is also an abuse of

power because the implication is that the gain was acquired by illegitimate means,

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[16] Richard Kreijcer, "Impression from God's Word 29," Into Thy Word Ministries, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?blogid=0&view=post&articleid=Impressions-from-Gods-Word-29&fldKeywords=&fldAuthor=&fldTopic=0&contentonly=true.

[17] Bruce Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 331.

[18] Francis Brown et al., "The KJV Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Betsa," Bible Study Tools, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/betsa.html.

[19] Edwin C. Hostetter, "Prophetic Attitudes Toward Violence in Ancient Israel," *Criswell Theological Review* 7, no. 2 (1994): 84, accessed March 2, 2015, *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

whether by influence or violently. In Jeremiah 5:28, God's people's "evil deeds have no limits." The behavior was modeled by all from the least to the greatest. Members have a tendency to follow the behavior of their church leader. The leader's evil "is deeper than being poor models and doing ethical wrong. Whoever accepts their "good" public, audible words, absorbs as well their evil, private, hidden and self-serving spirit."[20] Children mimic their parents hence followers mimic their prophets and priests.

Deals were brokered for their own self-interest and the fatherless and the poor were not defended. The fatherless and the poor rights were compromised and their voice silenced (Jer. 5:28). The church leaders legislate what benefits them and when others speak against their authority and policies victims are ridiculed and ostracized and deemed as trouble makers. To avoid being labeled, many conform to the status quo and begin to take on the accepted behavior. God calls the people wicked and compares them to men who "snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men (Jer. 5:26)." A snare is like a noose or a trap. The implication is that God's people have become wicked and will use entrapment to satisfy their greed. Use of entrapments is a means of control. When those who covet are in positions of authority, it sends a message that "theology has no practical bearing on ethics. Good is not having the courage to do justice and tell the truth, but keeping control: good is protecting oneself or one's unsavory secrets from exposure."[21] Often deceit is used to cover up the wrong and some will go to any extent to minimize scandal.

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[20] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 88.

[21] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 88.

God desires to forgive but God tells Jeremiah that one person cannot be found

who deals honestly and seek the truth (Jer. 5:1); "from prophet to priest, everyone deals

falsely (Jer. 6:13)." The Hebrew word for false is *"sheqer,"* which means "lie, deception,

disappointment, falsehood."[22] Prophets and priests are entrusted to proclaim the word of

God. God's word is truth, but they proclaim deception instead. In Deuteronomy 18:16-17,

God honors the request of Israel and appoints prophets for the people. The people were

afraid of the voice of God and did not want to see the fire, a theophany. God warns "but

any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name

a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak that prophet shall die (Deut.

18:20)." If the proclamation is from a mouth full of deceit, then God's message is

compromised.

> Prophecy according to Israel's testimony, becomes fraudulent when prophets do
> not speak Yahweh's true word, but speak some other word (Jeremiah 23:31).
> Particularly in the polemics of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, this self-invented word is
> characterized as an ideological defense of the status quo. It is a word that heals
> too lightly (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11), that softens and compromises the sovereign
> requirements of Yahweh.[23]

The practice of deceit from church leaders is harmful to those who are immature in the

faith. At this stage, there is a tendency to hang on to every word of the preacher or church

leader. When the preacher's integrity is questionable, then their witness is compromised

and the immature believer is led astray. Jeremiah too thought that the poor were foolish,

but when he made an appeal to the leaders thinking "surely they know the way of the

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[22] Francis Brown et al., "The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon: Sheqer," Bible Study Tools, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/sheqer.html.

[23] Brueggemann, *Theology of Old Testament*, 699.

Lord, the requirements of their God (Jer. 5:5)" he was disappointed to see that the leaders were on the same spiritual level as the poor.

Preachers are assumed "to be ethically, spiritually, and professionally trustworthy. They hold a uniquely "moral" profession in our society and their religious institution vouches for their integrity by hiring, i.e., legitimating, them."[24] Though the religious institution may vouch for them by honoring their credentials, Jeremiah questions whether they are chosen by God.

> But it is in connection with the word of prophets that the matter of falsehood is most distressing to God. As has been pointed out, Jeremiah singles out prophets and priests for special condemnation (4:9, 5:31, and 6:13), the former because they prophesy falsely and the latter because they work "hand in hand" with them, both because they deal falsely. "They have healed also the hurt ... of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (6:14). And when they had committed abomination, those who should have had the keenest conscience showed no sense of shame (6:15). The prophets are particularly guilty because they are actually without the word of God which they claim to handle (5:13). There is therefore no one to whom the Lord may speak to give warning, for "the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (6:10). The people love to have it this way (5:31), and the prophets, instead of giving them the word of God—Jeremiah seems to imply that they might still do this—give them the soothing words they want.[25]

The prophets prophesy falsely and deal falsely and are without God's word. The false prophets are not equipped to bring healing to Israel. Healing requires truth telling. One has to be willing to face the unadulterated truth to identify the problem so that the problem can be addressed. Merely dealing with the surface issues does not get to the root of the problem. To get to the root of the problem requires truth telling. The masking of the problem perpetuates the spiritual abuse. "Neither the abused, the abuser, nor the

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24 Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 80.

25 J. H. Gailey, "Sword and the Heart: Evil from the North - and Within: An Exposition of Jeremiah 4:5-6:30," *Interpretation* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 1955): 306, accessed February 9, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

church could heal, for healing requires truth telling."[26] Healing cannot begin in the midst

of deception and denial.[27]

Theological Implication

In Deuteronomy, it states that prophets spoke for God, however David

Greenspoon suggests that another role of the prophet is watcher. Watcher is "a metaphor

for the prophet's spiritual duty and obligation on behalf of the Israelite community."[28]

Historically a watcher, "scanned the horizon for messengers or signs of advancing

military forces."[29] The inference is that Jeremiah was a watcher appointed by God.

Greenspoon argues in Jeremiah 6:17 that "those who said *listen to the sound of the shofar*

were the watchers appointed by God."[30] As a watcher of Israel, "the prophet's

responsibility was to warn Israel of impending disaster. Certainly, the image of the

shofar-blowing in this verse brings to mind a warning of imminent national

emergency."[31] Greenspoon further suggests "the military role of the watcher from the

historical books: to insure the security of the community. It takes no great stretch of

imagination to suggest now that one role of the prophet was to warn the community of

impending danger from God's anger."[32] As it relates to spiritual abuse, the prophet is to

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[26] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 81.

[27] Brueggemann, *Theology of Old Testament*, 254.

[28] David Greenspoon, "The Prophet as Watcher," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 29, accessed March 9, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[29] Greenspoon, "The Prophet as Watcher," 29.

[30] Greenspoon, "The Prophet as Watcher," 32.

[31] Greenspoon, "The Prophet as Watcher," 32.

[32] Greenspoon, "The Prophet as Watcher," 32.

remain spiritually alert and warn of impending danger because of sins of the people and

not be the cause of the danger or the cause of the people to fall. Whether watcher,

spokesperson or both, the plight of Israel was at stake because the prophet did not carry

out their sacred role in the name of God and therefore must give an account to God,

(Deut. 18:19). They were acting on their own volition as if they were a god.

Meyers suggests, "church professionals who abuse their power are, theologically

speaking, idolatrous. All leaders shape the lives and spirits of those they influence after

the spirit that dwells in them, but abusers of power incarnate a false god. They do not

serve "in the image" of God; they act as gods."[33] This is a serious accusation but one that

is also found in Jeremiah. The priests were accused of not knowing the Lord and the

prophets were accused of prophesying by Baal (Jer. 2:8). Essentially the priests and

prophets were acting in authority not sanctioned by God, but were acting in authority

sanctioned by a false god. The priests and prophets theology were their own and not

supported by God's word. Since the prophets and priests were acting in their own

authority contrary to the word of God, it only suggests that perhaps triangulation was

happening with the remnant trying to remain faithful.

Triangulation is defined in family systems as "a scenario wherein two family

members in conflict each try to appeal to another member to lure them onto their side."[34]

In Jeremiah, there was conflict in the groups of prophets and priest and a split from the

least to the greatest. The conflict is clear and there is division among those who are in

support of and against Jeremiah. "We have here our first direct indication of factions

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[33] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 88.

[34] "Triangulation," Psychology Dictionary, accessed March 9, 2015,
http://psychologydictionary.org/triangulation-2/.

among the elites of Judah, for in the very court and palace of the king who would put

Jeremiah to death stand those who support him and save his life.[35]" Clearly there is

division amongst the priest and the prophets thus resulting in misappropriating power and

influence to garner support for their respective position. This is a form of triangulation.

Patricia Dutcher-Walls does not use the term triangulation, but it is implied.

> We have seen that the membership of each faction cuts across the various social groupings and roles that make up the highest class of society of the day. There is not one faction of priests versus prophets, or gentry versus king's officials. Rather, each faction seems to include the full range of elite social roles—prophets, officials, priests and gentry—in its circle of influence and power. Family connections are often evident and important, for fathers and sons often follow the same world-views. Coalitions are formed to increase influence and power. The divisions thus lie between political ideologies, not between roles, status levels or occupations among the elites.[36]

Triangulation occurs in the church when turmoil and issues surface and influence or

control is used for persons to choose a side. Since churches are made primarily of family

units, advocating family connections when church conflict arises can also become

abusive. Triangulation is wrong when a person is not allowed to form their own opinion

and is pressured by relationships to take a position they would not have normally chosen.

Triangulation is a means of building coalition.

According to Dutcher-Walls building coalition occurs when "factions gain power

against the king or other factions by lining up support for their position among various

groups and parts of the governmental and ruling-class structures.[37]" Triangulation is an

attempt to stack the deck and is a tactic that is abusive and often causes factions in the

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[35] Patricia Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists: A Sociological Study of Factional Politics in Late Pre-Exilic Judah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 52 (1991): 86, accessed March 9, 2015, *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

[36] Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location," 91.

[37] Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location," 88.

church and may lead to church splits. Triangulation does not resolve the problem but will

bring about isolation for those who refuse to go along.

Spiritual Abuse Relevance

The study of Jeremiah 6:13-15 shows that once spiritual abuse becomes the norm

it has a rippling effect amongst God's people. From the least to the greatest, all were

involved in abusive behavior. The role of priest and prophet is compromised when they

failed to mediate between God and God's people. The vocation of priest and prophet is

not of prominence, however a position of humility and obedience. In Jeremiah the priest

and prophet desired the approval of man and kept peace with Israel through compromise.

Priest and prophet should harken to the voice of God and proclaim God's word. During

the ordination process within the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, clergy are

challenged 'to take thou authority,' however their authority is to do the will of God. In

Jeremiah, they had a form of godliness but did not possess the power that is the anointing

(2 Tim. 3:5) of God. It is clear that the abuse of power by church figures become a

spiritual crisis for all those involved. Anderson makes this observation:

> The social bond of the covenant community was fractured – no one could be
> trusted; oppression was heaped up like a pyramid. The people were like "well-fed
> stallions," each neighing for his neighbor's wife (Jer. 5:8) and showing no
> concern for the defenseless victims of society (5:28). Blind nationalism, excited
> by deceitful prophets was rampant. Idolatry was practiced not only in the Temple
> but also on every hill and under every green tree.[38]

Anderson sums it up right. When God's treasured possession, that is clergy and members

of the body of Christ, actively participates in spiritual abuse the ramifications are even

outside the church's four walls. It affects the social bond of the church, the surrounding

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[38] Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament,* 358.

community and seekers of the faith. The shepherds assigned to care for the sheep did not

have the heart of God and was leading with wisdom not discernment from God. There is

a greater accountability for the priest and prophets for God has given them authority to

protect and feed his sheep as discussed in the New Testament pericope, 1 Peter 5:1-5.

The following section discusses the behavior of how a shepherd cares and protects the

sheep just as church leadership should care and protect the members entrusted in their

care.

New Testament

A model for church leadership interaction with church membership is found in 1

Peter 5:1-5. The model is conveyed by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:1) who declares that

he is an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry and Jesus suffering (1 Peter 5:1). Peter, a

fisherman, is one of the original twelve apostles Jesus called to follow him (Luke 5:1-11).

Peter is known for his cockiness and his trust in Jesus as evidenced when Peter walked on

water (Matt. 14:28-29) and Peter is also known for the revelation that Jesus is "the

Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16). Peter witnessed Jesus perform many

miracles and though Peter was part of Jesus' inner circle along with James and John

(Mark 9:2), this did not prohibit Jesus from rebuking and correcting Peter (John 18:10-

11). Even when Peter denied knowing Jesus, from a spiritual leadership perspective,

Jesus showed how to forgive and restore compassionately (Jn. 21:15-19). Jesus and

Peter's relationship is not compromised, but is strengthened because Jesus maintained a

Shepherd – Sheep rapport. As describe in 1 Peter 5:1-5, an elder in the body of Christ

shepherds God's sheep.

> Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1Peter 5:1-5).

Peter has been a sheep and now is a shepherd. Peter understands the expectation of both. In this shepherd – sheep relationship as described by Peter, the following questions are explored. What is Peter's primary leadership message? Who are the elders Peter is referring to and how does the role of the elder apply to the church today? In using the shepherd - sheep imagery, how does this relate to church leadership? What are the correct motives and responsibilities of church leadership and are they being compromised? In this context, Peter is not addressing spiritual abuse directly, but is conveying how it is avoided. In the following, Peter's leadership message is examined as it relates to the role of the elder and members in the shepherd – sheep model of leadership.

Leadership Message

Peter is writing to Christians across the Roman Empire and the letter serves as encouragement for those suffering for their belief in Christ (1 Peter 5:12 and 1 Peter 4:12-16). In the midst of persecution, Peter is also concerned about the relationship of the body of Christ with one another, which is suggested throughout the letter, but specifically in 1 Peter 5:1-5. According to J. R. Slaughter, the central message of Peter's letter needs to be understood when interrupting individual scriptures. "1 Peter constitutes a literary

work, it should be studied as literature having purpose, themes, and a message that influence the meaning and impact of its various parts." [39] Slaughter's research reveals behavior motifs when understood together constitute Peter's overall theme: "the believer's behavior, the believer's unfair treatment, the believer's deference, the believer's motivation by Christ's example, and the believer's anticipation of future glory."[40] The application of Slaughter's five motifs can be compared to 1 Peter 5:1-5. The Believer's behavior is comparable to 1 Peter 5:2-3, "tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it not for sordid gain but eagerly.[3] Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock." The Believer's unfair treatment, which is the presence of suffering is expressed throughout the epistle and is stated immediately in 1 Peter 1:6, "In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials," and is also stated in the concluding chapter 1 Peter 5:10 "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you." The Believer's deference is comparable to 1 Peter 5:5, "you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another." The Believer's motivation by Christ example is comparable to 1 Peter 5:2, "Tend the flock of God" … "As God would have you do it." The Believer's anticipation of future glory is comparable to 1 Peter 5:4, "you will receive the crown of glory."

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[39] J. R. Slaughter, "The Importance of Literary Argument for Understanding 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 605 (1995): 73, accessed March 7, 2015, *New Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

[40] Slaughter, "The Importance of Literary Argument," 75.

From these five motifs, the leadership message is to lead God's people willingly and even when treated poorly remain respectful and humble for your reward is not from man but from God. The word deference in Slaughter's motif is important to consider in pastoral and church leaders relationship. Deference is defined as "a way of behaving that shows respect for someone or something."[41] Mutual respect should characterize all relationships within the church. On the contrary, spiritual abuse is disrespectful. It is disrespectful of God and of God's flock. Peter is not merely suggesting the youth show deference but all, the entire body of Christ, should show deference including the church elders (1 Peter 5:5).

Church Elders

Holderread believes 'elder' in 1 Peter 5:1-5 "is one who is older and experienced in the faith."[42] In the Greek, elder is *"Presbuteros"* and can either refer to age, rank or office.[43] "The practice of the elder role is basically that of being the custodian of the faith."[44] Holderread suggests that this is a not an ordination role such as pastor or a bishop. Therefore in Peter's letter, Holderread would argue that elder refers to those mature in the faith in the early church and are assuming leadership roles.

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[41] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* s.v. "Deference," accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deference.

[42] Kenneth O. Holderread, "The Role of Eldering and the Christian Community," *Brethren Life And Thought* 24, no. 4 (September 1, 1979): 205, accessed March 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[43] Henry Thayer and George Abbott-Smith, "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon: Presbuteros", Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/presbuteros.html.

[44] Holderread, "The Role of Eldering," 206.

1 Peter 5:1-5 offers some valuable guidance for understanding the eldership role. In verse 1, Peter describes an elder. The text reads: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed." "Elder" here is one who is older and experienced in the faith. A witness to the sufferings of Christ in Peter's case is one who saw Christ's sufferings and also one who experienced them through his own sufferings for Christ's sake. This is an experienced person in the faith. An elder who is a "partaker in the glory that is to be revealed" is one who, like Peter, has a solid assurance and confidence based upon experience of life to be found in Jesus Christ.[45]

John Hall Elliot is in agreement with Holderread that elders were Believers "who, because of their prestige and status in the household churches of which they were the household heads, were recognized and respected as leaders of their respective household churches."[46] By broadening the definition and not restricting the role of elder to ordained clergy, there is a greater since of responsibility and ownership for the spiritual condition of the church among the laity. Elliot also asserts that this term is extended to all Believers.

When 1 Pet 5:l-5a is seen in connection with 5:5b—11, which addresses the entire community, a relativization and limitation of the authority of these elders/leaders becomes even clearer. Here elders/ leaders are included among *all* believers, who are enjoined to "clothe yourselves with humility in your relations with one another because 'God opposes the arrogant but gives grace to the humble."[47]

Holderread too suggests that various people can take on the role of elder in the church. "This role can help a congregation to be a stable body and at the same time extend an opportunity for growth, love, trust, forgiveness, and faithfulness."[48] In general, this

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[45] Holderread, "The Role of Eldering," 205-206.

[46] John Hall Elliott, "Elders as Leaders in 1 Peter and the Early Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28, no. 6 (December 1, 2001): 552, accessed March 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[47] Elliott, "Elders as Leaders," 556.

[48] Holderread, "The Role of Eldering," 209.

scripture speaks to mature church leaders. In the A.M.E. context that includes pastor,

stewards, trustees and ministry leaders. Primarily, it is the duty of the pastor along with

church leaders to care for the flock that is the church members who are entrusted to their

care. This is inclusive of those giving leadership to various ministries in the church. In

addition, the church members also should exhibit deference and humility in dealing with

all. The shepherd – sheep imagery provides a picture of how the interaction should occur.

Shepherd – Sheep Image

In the Old and New Testament, the shepherd – sheep image is used to convey God

being relational to God's people and the expectation God has for those who are in

authority over God's people. In the Old Testament,

> God is "the Shepherd of Israel" (Ps. 80:1); Israel is "the people of his pasture and
> the sheep of his hand" (Ps. 75:7). The Shepherd God appoints under-shepherds:
> "Thou didst lead thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron"
> (Ps. 77:20). Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses "that the congregation of the
> Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:17).[49]

The Shepherd - Sheep image is also used in the prophets, specifically when God declares

"woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" (Jer. 23:1)."

Similar to the Old Testament depiction, John F. Jansen also shows how Jesus is the

Shepherd and how God is the chief Shepherd.

> The one who is born in Bethlehem will "shepherd my people Israel" (Mt. 2:6).
> The Gospels make it clear that Jesus understood his ministry as embodying the
> will of the Shepherd God who seeks the lost (Lk. 15:3-10, Mt. 18:12-14). He
> himself exhibits a shepherd's solicitude for his flock. Seeing the crowds "he had

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[49] John F. Jansen, "The Pastoral Image in the New Testament," *Austin Seminary Bulletin (Faculty Ed.)* 94, no. 8 (May 1, 1979): 13, accessed March 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mk. 6:34). Indeed, Jesus is "the good Shepherd."[50]

The shepherd - sheep image is one that God's people of the Old and New Testament could readily identify with because they were from an agrarian society. The shepherd's livelihood was dependent on their ability to care for and protect the sheep in their care. Therefore, "a theory of shepherd leadership suggests that shepherd leaders are leaders who lead to insure the well-being of their followers through the behaviors of guiding, providing, and protecting. This creates the perception that a shepherd leader is one who performs certain behavioral tasks associated with shepherd leadership."[51] James E. Swalm's research suggests that shepherd leaders perform certain behavioral tasks because they are shepherd leaders; they are not shepherd leaders because they perform these behavioral tasks.[52] This argument suggests that shepherd leaders have a natural inclination for the role and are not merely responsibilities to be carried out. A shepherd's heart has a genuine love for God's people and warns against spiritual abuse. A shepherd protects and provides for the sheep. On the contrary, a shepherd does not expose the sheep to danger or abuse them.

The Chief Shepherd Model

The chief shepherd model suggests that because the sheep belongs to God, the shepherds are merely middle managers, and the middle manager must give an account to

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[50] Jansen, "The Pastoral Image," 14.

[51] James E. Swalm, "The Development of Shepherd Leadership Theory and the Validation of the Shepherd Leadership Inventory (SLI)," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 5, no. 2 (September 2011): 120, accessed March 7, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[52] Swalm, "The Development of Shepherd Leadership Theory," 120.

the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:2). The Greek word for shepherd in 1 Peter 5:2 is

"poimaino," which literally mean "to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep,"[53] but the

implication in this verse is to rule or govern the flock. The Greek reference for flock is

"poimnion." which could refer to a flock of sheep, but in this scripture it also refers to "a

group of Christ's disciples" or "bodies of Christian (churches) presided over by elders."[54]

The shepherd is providing spiritual oversight to the sheep and are stewards of the sheep

entrusted to their care. "They are not absentee lords, but are shepherds actively working

with the flock around them."[55] In 1 Peter 5:4, the Chief Shepherd Greek term is

"Archipoimen" and in this scripture refers to "of Christ the head of the church."[56] "As the

"Chief Shepherd" Christ is in charge of the entire flock and all the elders are under-

shepherds whose work will be evaluated and rewarded by Him."[57] From John Elliot's

writings, there is an implied model: Chief Shepherd, undershepherd and recent converts.

> As leaders, these elders are exhorted to "shepherd the flock of God among you" (v. 2a) by "exercising oversight" (v. 2b) in a responsible manner spelled out by a triad of qualities unique in the New Testament (vv. 2c-3). As a consequence of their responsible leadership, they are promised that when the "chief Shepherd" (= Jesus Christ, cf. 2:25) is manifested, these "undershepherds" will receive "the unfading crown of glory" (v. 4). To these honorable elders-leaders, the younger

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[53] Henry Thayer and George Abbott-Smith, "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon: Poimaino," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/poimaino.html.

[54] Henry Thayer and George Abbott-Smith, "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon: Poimnion," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/poimnion.html.

[55] Edmond Hiebert, "Selected Studies from 1 Peter, Pt 4: Counsel for Christ's Under-Shepherds: An Exposition of 1 Peter 5:1-4," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 556 (October 1, 1982): 335, accessed March 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[56] Henry Thayer and George Abbott-Smith, "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon: Archipoimen," Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/archipoimen.html.

[57] Hiebert, "Selected Studies from 1 Peter," 339.

persons (i.e., the recent converts of the community, the novices in faith) are to be subordinate (v. 5a).[58]

Accountability is also implied in this model. All are accountable to God, however the recent converts are accountable to the undershepherd and the undershepherd is accountable to God. When there is no accountability then it is easier to follow one's vices and make up the rules as needed.

> The Christian community is referred to as "the flock of God," and the elders are urged to "shepherd" (poimanete) this flock (topoimnion) "by exercising oversight" (episkopountes) (5:2). To "exercise oversight," or to be an episkopos, involves "the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way," to function as a "guardian."[59]

Even in the Chief Shepherd model abuse happens when there are "self-appointed pastors-for-profit and merchandisers of God's grace; where pastors treat the flock not as God's but as their own; where overseers and bishops attempt to command from the top down like princes of the church rather than as shepherds who lead by humble example."[60] In the Chief Shepherd model there is accountability and the shepherd's motives are pure.

Shepherd's Motives

Shepherding God's flock is spiritual work and not merely a career. A lot of sacrifice and tedious work is part of the journey:

> To enter the ministry simply because it offers a respectable and intellectually stimulating way of gaining a livelihood is to prostitute that sacred work. This

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[58] John Hall Elliott, "Elders as Leaders in 1 Peter and the Early Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28, no. 6 (December 1, 2001): 552, accessed March 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[59] Elliott, "Elders as Leaders," 553.

[60] Elliott, "Elders as Leaders," 556.

warning also includes the temptation to use the work of the ministry to gain personal popularity or social influence.[61]

This is an abuse of the vocation for personal gain at the expense of the sheep. In these instances, winning the crown of glory is an afterthought. There is a recent phenomenon of pastors having reality television shows. It begs the question to be addressed if whether these television shows are helping or hindering the perception of church leaders. The television shows depict popular pastors with mega churches and seems to focus on the pastor's personal life rather than their pastoral interaction with the flock. Are pastors on reality television an example of 'prostituting the sacred work?' "This warning also includes the temptation to use the work of the ministry to gain personal popularity or social influence. When a love for gain reigns, the shepherds are prone to become mere hirelings, feeding themselves at the expense of the flock."[62] Is there a genuine care for God's sheep, or is the reality television show a means to gain more popularity, influence and income? When popularity, influence and income become the motivation, then there may be no limits to obtain the goal.

Ezekiel 34:2-6 (NIV) sums up what a shepherd of God's flock should not do. This text is representative of a shepherd spiritually abusing the sheep.

> Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? [3] You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. [4] You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. [5] So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. [6] My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every

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[61] Hiebert, "Selected Studies from 1 Peter," 336-337.

[62] Hiebert, "Selected Studies from 1 Peter," 336-337.

high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or
looked for them (Ezk. 34:2-6).

The shepherds were self-absorbed and believed in self-preservation. Their needs and

desires were fulfilled at the expense of the sheep and the flock went without. The sheep

were neglected and battered and when they escaped they were vulnerable and became

prey. The shepherd is guilty of gross neglect and abuse of authority. 1 Peter 5:2-3 shows

how a shepherd should lead by presenting contrasting views. A shepherd should lead not

because you must, *"Anagkastos"* meaning by force, but because you are willing,

"Hekousios" meaning "voluntarily, willingly, of one's own accord." A shepherd should

not be greedy, *"Aischrokerdos"* meaning "eagerness for base gain," for money but eager,

"Prothumos" meaning "willingly, with alacrity," to serve. A shepherd should not lord,

"Katakurieuo" meaning "to hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over," it

over those entrusted to you but be examples, Greek word Tupos meaning "in an ethical

sense, a dissuasive example, a pattern of warning," to the flock.[63]

Church leaders who have a shepherd's heart has a willingness to lead God's

people because they view the ministry assignment as work unto God, and not work unto

man. Although some church leaders make substantial salaries it is truly not the norm and

typically the job satisfaction comes from seeing others flourish in the ministry. Church

leaders are not mere teachers of the word but their lives reflect the message they teach.

> Pastoral leadership must be freely and willingly undertaken "as God would have
> you do it" (NRSV), with no trace of self-serving or "lording it over" the flock.
> Elders/shepherds exercising oversight are to act in accord with God's will, ever
> mindful of the fact that the flock is not theirs to dominate but God's (cf. v. 2a) and
> that it is God who has "allotted" these sheep to their charge (v. 3). Their task is to
> lead by example and not as overlords. A domineering mode of leadership can be

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[63] Henry Thayer and George Abbott-Smith, "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon: Tupos,"
Bible Study Tools, accessed April 25, 2016,
http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/tupos.html.

avoided only when elders "walk the talk" and lead not by domination but by inspiration.[64]

Church leaders are called to lead by example and live the word of God. Another quality of church leaders is humility. In 1 Peter 5:5, "all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another." Leaders and subordinates must have mutual respect for one another. Even when there are issues, the church leader can be firm and yet remain humble.

Spiritual Abuse Relevance

1 Peter 5:1-5 candidly speaks to the behavior of all in the church, whether pastor, church leader or general member. The scripture provides a behavioral model for leadership based on mutual respect. Spiritual abuse happens when there is a lack of respect or minimization of a member's worth. It is easier to abuse what is not of value. 1 Peter 5:1-5 is not a hierarchical model of leadership but it shows strong ties of accountability of behavior to each other and ultimately to God. The church belongs to God and not the elders however the elders who are mature in the faith play an integral part by working with the church body and not lauding their experience over the immature believers. The elders of the church willingly and eagerly serve with the understanding that they are mere stewards and God owns it all, including God's flock.

The Old and New Testament provides strong imagery of how a shepherd cares for a sheep. The shepherd primary duty is to nurture the sheep by feeding, protecting the sheep from danger and guarding the sheep from going astray. Similarly, it is the duty of the pastor and the church leaders to care for God's flock that is the church members who

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[64] Elliot, "Elders as Leaders," 556.

are entrusted to their care by nurturing, protecting and guarding. Those young in the faith typically look to those mature in the faith for wisdom and guidance.

The old adage 'do as I say and not as I do' is not acceptable in today's society. Everybody is under scrutiny, nobody is excused. Church leaders cannot place demands on church membership that they are not willing to abide by themselves. Biblical information is widely available on the Internet and many other sources. There is a generation that has a lot of head knowledge but it has not pierced their heart. Church leaders cannot merely spew out a lot of philosophical thought but their life must reflect the gospel message they proclaim. Integrity not just in talk but integrity in the Christian walk is ultimately what is visible to the seekers of the faith. Visible shepherd behavior as described in 1 Peter 5:1-5 would help ward off spiritual abuse.

Conclusion

This chapter provides credence that spiritual abuse is a serious offense to God and damaging to God's flock. Jeremiah 6:13-15 serves as a foundational scripture for increasing the knowledge and recognizing the signs of spiritual abuse amongst the body of Christ. During the time of Jeremiah, essentially all, from the least to the greatest were involved in abusive behavior: abuse of spiritual authority, covetousness and deceit. On the contrary, 1 Peter 5:1-5 conveys how church leadership should relate to God's flock. 1 Peter 5:1-5 is a behavioral model based on mutual respect. The model uses the shepherd – sheep imagery. A shepherd protects and provides for the sheep and does not abuse the sheep. Having a shepherd's heart, a genuine love for God's people, wards against spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse is an abuse of authority that God has entrusted to church

leaders. In a blog of Bishop Willimon of the United Methodist Church, he espouses what is true spiritual authority:

> True spiritual authority begins only when we reject the sinful temptation to embrace the ways of power. Power is self-centered and self-serving; its clarion cry is "my will be done!" Power is measured in dollars, in clout, in control. It is brokered by fear and intimidation. Its goal is always to win and, in winning, to create losers. Power builds fiefdoms and empires. Power always believes in its own wisdom, its own strength, its own purpose. Power answers to nothing beyond itself, not even to God.[65]

Instead of power that corrupts, church leadership needs to view their role as being stewards of spiritual authority. The authority comes from God and we are merely entrusted with it. "Spiritual authority must answer to scripture, to tradition, and to the living community of the church, from which it never stands apart or above."[66] Ultimately, church leaders are accountable to God and church members are accountable to one another.

This chapter is foundational for the doctorate of ministry project because it gives biblical credence to spiritual abuse and gives legitimacy when defining signs to look for spiritual abuse amongst the body of Christ. It is imperative that church leaders are equipped with the knowledge of spiritual abuse and be able to clearly identify what it is and what are the warning signs of danger. In addition the chapter also serves as a springboard to modeling appropriate behavior and boundaries for church leaders. This information will also allow church leaders to assess their own behavioral style when interacting with others.

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[65] Will Willimon, "A Peculiar Prophet," *The Blog of Bishop Will Willimon of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church,* February 12, 2007, accessed March 18, 2015, http://willimon.blogspot.com/2007/02/take-thou-authority.html.

[66] Willimon, "A Peculiar Prophet."

The desired outcome is for church leaders to recognize spiritual abuse and be able to implement preventative and healing techniques. Healing requires truth telling. Instead of conforming to get along, church leaders should encourage openness. Merely dealing with the surface issues does not get to the root of the problem. There is also a biblical model on how to properly handle offense so it does not lead to abuse. It is found in Matthew 18:15-17, which states:

> If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. [16] But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17] If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This biblical approach does not have to be threatening, but it can serve as a starting point for how the healing process should begin. The body of Christ is a place of healing and it should not perpetuate abuse.

The goal of this project is to equip church leadership with the necessary knowledge concerning spiritual abuse. Generating awareness is the first step in prevention, and secondly to educate church leaders on a biblical behavioral model on how church leadership should carry out spiritual authority.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter will explore the persecutions of Christians in the early church, provide an overview of John Wesley and American Methodism's views on slavery, and examine how the African Methodist Episcopal A.M.E. Church was birthed out of racial oppression in the eighteenth century. This chapter will highlight how the A.M.E. Church oppressed women in ministry, assimilated their clergy to the dominant culture, stereotyped the model male clergy, and instituted the Minister's Bill of rights to protect clergy and their families in pastoral assignments.

Spiritual abuse is not a new phenomenon and oppressive behavior among clergy and church members is a factor that leads to factions and divisions in the church. Historically, the Protestant Movement came out the Roman Catholic Church; the Methodist Societies came out of the Anglican Church; and African Methodism came out of the American Methodism due to abuse of power. In this historic cycle, the abuse was inflicted upon subordinates. Often the spiritual abuse becomes viral and an accepted behavior unless a voice raises that speaks against the injustices. Specifically, "spiritual abuse occurs when an authority figure causes harm to a person in the name of God or a faith community, thereby diminishing that person's sense of self. Spiritual abuse crosses

religious boundaries and may be subtle or overt, mild or traumatic."[1] "Whether it is

psychological or physical, abusive power is destructive. It is used to annihilate, humiliate,

and devastate. It comes in the form of words and language."[2] When this abusive power is

not challenged, it has a tendency of becoming an accepted behavior and a social norm.

Theologian and Sociologist, Gregory Baum brings the two disciplines together when he

defines social sin.

> Social sin begins with an identification of the *dehumanizing trends* embedded
> within social institutions, that is, formational contexts and traditions. Living in a
> world marred by human wickedness, we often uncritically accept destructive
> habits embedded in our social, political, economic, and religious institutions.
> Baum contends that social sin is further characterized by *false consciousness*
> through which "people involve themselves collectively in destructive action as if
> they were doing the right thing." This self-delusion, adopted by both the rich and
> powerful as well as the weak and oppressed members of society, exacerbates
> unjust behavior.[3]

Based on this definition of social sin, spiritual abuse within the church falls into this

category. Where spiritual abuse occurs, there is a false consciousness amongst churches

and church leadership influenced by the church's culture that lead to destructive actions.

Social drivers such as economics, racism, gender bias, classicism and religious

convictions often play a role in spiritual abuse. In some instances, the abused takes on the

very behavior they attempted to escape.

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[1] Melanie Childers, "Holy Havoc: Chaplains as First Responders in Healing Spiritual Abuse," *Chaplaincy Today (Online)* 28, no. 2 (September 1, 2012): 37, accessed March 7, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[2] Monica C. Jones, "The Spirit of Hagar: Living in an Unfriendly House," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 31, no. 1-2 (September 1, 2004): 70, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[3] Michael Tapper, "Social Sin and Needed Corporate Reform in the Wesleyan Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (September 1, 2013): 194-195, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

Christianity: Birth from Opposition

The biblical text confirms Jesus was ridiculed, oppressed and eventually crucified

for his religious convictions by the Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin Council, and

likewise Jesus closest followers were abused as the Christian church was being

established. The crux of the Jewish Christian belief was that Jesus was crucified yet

resurrected from the dead. Central to the Sadducees' belief was the denial of the

resurrection, so the Sadducees vehemently opposed Jewish Christians.[4] The Sadducees

felt it was their bounden duty to uphold the law, the prophets and the temple.

> The enmity of the Sadducees, however, led to harassment of the Jewish
> Christians. As the chief opponents of Jesus, they tried to suppress the Christian
> *ekklesia* from its formation and accused Stephen, the leader of the Jewish
> Christian Hellenists, of blasphemous words against the Law and the Temple, as
> they had charged Jesus. Later, around 58 AD, the Sadducees also accused Paul of
> defiling the Temple and breaking the Law (Acts 21-27fi). Then in 62 AD,
> Josephus records, James, the brother of Jesus, was killed by stoning at the
> instigation of the high priest Ananos and the council leadership, not at the demand
> of the people. The accusation against James and the others was that they had
> transgressed the law.[5]

After Jesus' ascension, the disciples were advancing Christianity to their own demise.

The disciples and other followers were murdered and clearly Christianity was birth out of

violence, persecution, imprisonment and ultimately martyrdom. No doubt the Jewish

leaders felt they were defending and preserving the purity of their faith. The Jewish

leaders were acting out of their religious consciousness but clearly it was an abuse of

power.

> Christians did undoubtedly face hostility, arrest, and martyrdom from its
> inception, even if it tended to be sporadic and localized. For small fragile

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[4] Clayton Harrop and Charles W. Draper, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1998), 917.

[5] V. Kesich, "The Church Before Paul," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 19, accessed May 15, 2015, *New Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

immunities, it would not take much in the way of opposition either from Jewish or Gentile sources to engender a feeling of fear, insecurity, and victimization, especially after the Neronic persecutions of 64 CE.[6]

Under Nero, Christianity was punishable by death, unless the religion was renounced by offering sacrifices to the Roman gods.[7] Through the early church history Christians were persecuted, but they also became the ones performing the persecution. As the church progressed in membership in the fourth and fifth centuries, "there were occasional acts of violence by Christians who destroyed buildings and images and by both pagans and Christians who committed acts of murder and intimidation."[8] Pagan worship buildings were confiscated and added to the imperial treasury and fines were levied against the pagan worshippers.[9] The Christian Church now became the oppressor. In addition, oppressive conditions have motivated many Christian groups to leave parent churches.[10] Even when John Wesley brought revival within the Church of England in the 1700's it was also met with opposition. It is necessary to include a brief section on John Wesley and Methodism for the A.M.E. Church to display the method in which Wesley embraced its Wesleyan heritage.

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[6] P. Middleton, "Enemies of the (Church and) State: Martyrdom as a Problem for Early Christianity," *Annali Di Storia Dell' Esegesi* 29, no. 2 (2012): 166, accessed May 16, 2015, *New Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

[7] National Geographic, "Roman Emperors Execute Christians," accessed May 21, 2015, http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/timeline_09.html.

[8] Alan Kreider, "Violence and Mission in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries: Lessons for Today," *International Bulletin Of Missionary Research* 31, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 126, accessed May 20, 2015, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host*.

[9] Kreider, "Violence and Mission," 127.

[10] William P. DeVeaux, "Christian Faith and Social Policy in the Thought of Richard Allen," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 10, no. 1-2 (September 1, 1983): 86, accessed May 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

Wesley, The Anglican Church and Methodism

The sons of a devout Anglican Church family, John and Charles Wesley intent

was never to start a new church, but rather "to reform the Church of England from within,

believing that the church lacked interest to impact the hurting human needs of the English

people."[11] While attending Oxford University, they formed a religious 'Holy Club' where

the members methodically "gathered early each day for study, prayer, and outreach. They

visited the prisons, taught children of the poor, and delivered meals to the hungry. The

name 'Methodists' began as a joke term."[12] John Wesley claimed that he was a cogent

voice for those who were marginalized.[13] Wesley had a passion for the least of these.

Subsequently, Methodist societies were established throughout England for those who

shared Wesley's vision for the Anglican Church.

Remaining an Anglican priest, John Wesley as a member of the Methodist

Society believed in preaching the gospel, clergy education and in itinerancy.[14] The basic

Wesleyan mandate was to preach with the intent "*to form* or *rehabilitate* the 'societies' in

the existent church."[15] Change rarely happens without resistance. This was problematic

for those Anglican clergy who did not share the Methodist 'Call.'[16] The Methodist

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[11] "History of Methodism," Broomfield United Methodist Church, accessed May 16, 2015, http://www.broomfieldumc.org/methodism.

[12] "History of Methodism," Broomfield United Methodist Church, accessed May 16, 2015, http://www.broomfieldumc.org/methodism.

[13] Tapper, "Social Sin," 197.

[14] David C. Shipley, "Methodist Ministry in the Eighteenth Century," *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 13, no. 1 (September 1, 1959): 6, accessed May 16, 2015, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host*.

[15] Shipley, "Methodist Ministry," 9.

[16] Shipley, "Methodist Ministry," 12.

preacher could not minister without the sanction of the Anglican Church and could not serve communion.[17] However, John Wesley challenged the Methodists to minister beyond their local society.[18] Methodism spread like wild-fire and today Methodism is worldwide however its lack of cooperation has led to many factions. Tapper asserts:

> The present lack of unified purpose among Methodists could be attributed to a selfish, individualistic mindset that has accentuated distinctions and failed to celebrate our commonalities, such as our history of engagement with the poor. In less than three hundred years, Methodism has expanded from one Englishman's vision within a national church, to an independent church, and, presently, to a complex, global community of over 100 self-regulating denominations and churches.[19]

"American Methodism was birthed in the 1800s without the blessing of British Methodism. Not long afterward, American Methodists became deeply divided over disagreements concerning slavery, temperance, and the role of women in the church, resulting in the emergence of several breakaway Methodist denominations."[20] In the article, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800*, Andrew states "throughout the colonies and the new states, they (Methodist Clergy) were perceived as parvenus, or worse, magicians capable of seducing young and old into their cult like revivalist societies and class meetings."[21] Methodists were being portrayed as enemies of the state, largely because of how John Wesley spoke out against slavery in America.[22] "In

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[17] Shipley, "Methodist Ministry," 10.

[18] Shipley, "Methodist Ministry," 11.

[19] Tapper, "Social Sin," 205.

[20] Tapper, "Social Sin," 206.

[21] Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

[22] Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America,* 4.

1775 Wesley pointed out the hypocrisy of colonists who called for freedom from

England's tyranny while maintaining the practice of slavery: one is screaming Murder!

Slavery! the other silently bleeds and dies!"[23] Methodists were forbidden from

participating in the slave trade. John Wesley appealed to the heart and conscious of those

involved in the slave trade:

> Are you a man? Then you should have a human heart. ... Do you never feel
> another's pain? Have you no sympathy ... no sense of human woe, no pity for the
> miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breasts, or the bleeding
> sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, was [were] you a stone, or a
> brute? . . . Whatever you lose, lose not your soul: Nothing can countervail that
> loss. Immediately quit the horrid trade: At all events, be an honest man.[24]

Slavery and racial hatred was embedded into the fabric of America. It was out of this

social climate that the A.M.E. Church found its origin.

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Richard Allen, the founder of A.M.E. Church was a slave, converted his slave

master to Christianity and eventually purchased his freedom. For Allen like Wesley

slavery was an abomination. Although the A.M.E. Church was birth out of racism, its

existence affirmed the dignity of black people as children of God. Richard Allen was

adamant about speaking against oppressive social structures.

> Allen believed that the Black community had to be organized to deal responsibly
> with its own problem as long as American prejudice and indifference refused to
> erase the color line. And he also believed that an independent Black Church,
> which made every aspect of life its field of witness, was the most widely accepted

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[23] Irv Brendlinger, "John Wesley and Slavery: Myth and Reality." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 236, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[24] Brendlinger, "John Wesley and Slavery," 226-227.

and effective instrument among Black people with which to pursue the twin goals of spiritual holiness and civil freedom.[25]

Historians, documentaries, and Richard Allen's 1833 autobiography corroborate the walk out of black people from St. George Methodist Church. In 1787, "when the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall. It got worse: blacks were informed one Sunday morning that Blacks must sit in a segregated balcony."[26] Instead of going to the segregated balcony, they integrated with the white worshippers on the main floor. As Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, were praying, "white trustees having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him off of his knees, and saying, 'you must get up – you must not kneel here.'"[27] The blacks in attendance filed out the church when prayer was over. There is debate on when the incident occurred, but the incident did occur. In this incident "the negative factor is of course discrimination by whites against black fellow-worshippers. The positive factor is the assertion by black men of their essential dignity as men, as children of God, as citizens of the nation."[28] However the black people were determined to free themselves so they could worship without harassment, but even their departure was met with opposition.

> He was opposed by both influential Blacks and by the clergy of St. George Church, who, according to Allen, "used every degrading and insulting language to us to try to prevent us from going on." They were directly forbidden to continue their prayer services and meetings of exhortation, but they did not accede to these

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[25] DeVeaux, "Christian Faith and Social Policy," 94.

[26] Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008), 64.

[27] Newman, *Freedom's Prophet,* 64.

[28] William H. Becker, "Black Church: Manhood and Mission," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 3 (September 1, 1972): 319, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

demands for the reason that " . . . we viewed the forlorn state of our colored brethren, and that they were destitute of a place to worship. They were considered a nuisance." Evidently, as a result of Allen's preaching the numbers of Blacks attending the St. George Church became offensive to the whites and conditions were made so intolerable for them that they withdrew.[29]

The abuse and oppression did not end with the blacks leaving St. George Church. The blacks met resistance when they attempted to raise funds and build their church. Allen was threatened to either submit to the Elder of the Methodist Conference, or he would be read out of the Methodist Church.[30] Public comments and observations made from prestigious White Methodist ministers such as Ignatius Few on help further the departure of blacks from the Methodist Episcopal Church.

> Ignatius Few, a prestigious white Methodist minister from Savannah, Georgia and president of Emory College, argued against equal representation of and for black people within the Methodist church. According to Few, if blacks, particularly slaves, cannot testify against whites in court, and if they, by the nation's laws are not equal socially or spiritually, the Methodist Church is under no obligation to regard blacks as having any equal rights within such jurisdiction.[31]

The A.M.E. Church flourished and "preserved all the characteristic features of Methodist doctrine, polity, and practice while encouraging the Negroes to develop their church life on an independent basis, free from any supervision by white ministers who might be disposed to curb the development of race consciousness or hinder the Negro in his efforts at self-development and self-expression."[32] In 1816, the A.M.E. Church was officially

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[29] Lawrence N. Jones, "They Sought a City: The Black Church and Churchmen in the Nineteenth Century," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 26, no. 3 (March 1, 1971): 260, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[30] Newman, *Freedom's Prophet,* 69.

[31] John S. Walker, "Morris Brown: Crisis Leadership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1830-1850," *Perspective (Pittsburgh)* 13, no. 2 (March 1, 1972): 150, accessed May 5, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[32] J. Minton Batten, "Henry M. Turner, Negro Bishop Extraordinary," *Church History* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1938): 235, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

organized into a conference. A strong sense of self-worth, dignity and morality grew out

of the members associated with the A.M.E. Church. This character molding was the

platform of several bishops in the early life of the A.M.E. Church. Notably Bishop Daniel

Payne felt the A.M.E. Church "produced independent thought, independent action, and an

independent hierarchy, and the latter has made us feel and recognize our individuality and

our heaven-created manhood."[33] In realizing this heaven-created manhood, the brothers

would soon oppress their sisters in ministry.

Oppression of Women in Ministry

As the result of the 1816 formation of the A.M.E. Church, the first A.M.E.

Doctrine and Discipline was produced in 1817. Although women notably were a part of

the congregation, the representations of their voices at conferences were limited to the

men.

> The General Conference or Convention shall be composed of one delegate for
> every two hundred members belonging to our society, who shall be nominated by
> the Quarterly Meeting Conference, and appointed by the male members of
> society, according to the charters or constitutions of the different African
> Churches belonging to our society; but no minister or preacher shall be eligible to
> the office of delegate, until he has been licensed according to our discipline, for at
> least two years.[34]

It clearly states in the 1817 Doctrine and Discipline that only the 'male members of

society' constituted the delegation. Even in 1852, the A.M.E. General conference "voted

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[33] Becker, "Black Church," 320.

[34] African Methodist Episcopal Church, "The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church First Edition, 1817," Documenting the American South (Philadelphia, PA: John H. Cunningham, 1817), 56, accessed May 5, 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/ame/ame.html.

adversely to the licensing of women to preach."[35] Womanist Theologian and Professor

Dr. Jacquelyn Grant observed of Richard Allen:

> Rev. Richard Allen perceived that it was unjust for blacks, whether free or slaves, to be relegated to the balcony and restricted to a special time to pray and kneel at the communion table. Yet because of his acceptance of the patriarchal system, Allen was unable to see the injustice in relegating women to one area of the church—the pews—by withholding ordination from women as he did in the case of Mrs. Jarena Lee.[36]

Between 1809 and 1811, Jarena Lee received the call to preach and she met with Rev.

Richard Allen to share her calling. Rev. Allen did not object to women holding prayer

meetings or exhorting congregations after licensed ministers had preached their sermon,

but as for recognizing Jarena Lee in some official capacity as a preacher, Rev. Allen

stated that the rules of Methodism simply "did not call for women preachers."[37] Jarena

Lee was never ordained, although Allen did acknowledge her calling after hearing her

preach.[38] However Jarena Lee forged ahead and concluded: "if a man may preach,

because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also. Is he

not a whole Savior, instead of a half one? as those who hold it wrong for a woman to

preach would seem to make it appear?"[39]

    Just as the A.M.E. Church needed to separate from the established Methodist

church, Jarena Lee and other women were forced to preach apart from the recognized

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[35] Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia, PA: D. M. Baxter, 1922), 24.

[36] Susan J. Hubert, "Testimony and Prophecy in the Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee," *Journal of Religious Thought* 54 (March 1, 1998): 52, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[37] William L. Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 5.

[38] Hubert, "Testimony and Prophecy," 49.

[39] Hubert, "Testimony and Prophecy," 50.

ministries of the church. "Having been denied the pulpit, women 'organized' outside of formal church institutions where they were free to recognize each other as spiritual leaders."[40] Even in the twenty-first century, an ordained A.M.E. female minster makes the following observation:

> The word "revolution" may appear too radical for a discussion of clergywomen and their call to serve as pastors! Yet, in the socio-political context what can be more violent, war-like, or tyrannical than the oppression and marginalization of women clergy in male-dominated pulpits, churches, and institutions? What can be more violent than the humiliation of being declared unworthy to serve God's people? What is more war-like than having to fight for an appointment to a church for which you are more than qualified, while less qualified males receive choice assignments? What is more tyrannical than having the desire, the gift, and the call to preach the Word, just to be told that in the pulpit, "Women must remain silent?"[41]

Although A.M.E. female ministers have made tremendous strides, it was not until "1992 at Orlando, Florida, the 44th Session of the General Conference took the herstoric step of accepting the resolution to admit the Commission on Women in Ministry (WIM)."[42] As a recognized commission, WIM is now part of the General Board which reports to the General Conference. Interestingly enough, eight years after the establishment of WIM, the first female bishop, Rev. Vashti McKenzie, was elected in 2000. Timeline of significant A.M.E. Women in Ministry events includes around 1820, Jarena Lee was the first A.M.E. women preacher, but was not ordained.[43] Approximately 1880, Sarah Hughes was ordained an A.M.E. Deacon by Bishop Turner in North Carolina, but the

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[40] Hubert, "Testimony and Prophecy," 50.

[41] Jones, "They Sought a City," 61.

[42] , "Objectives of AME / WIM," Women in Ministry African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed May 17, 2015, http://www.amewim.com/display.aspx?wimhistory3.

[43] Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134.

ordination was overturn in 1888.[44] The resolution adopted at the 1888 General

Conference states:

> Where Bishop H. M. Turner has seen fit to ordain a woman to the order of a deacon; and whereas said act is contrary to the usage of our church, and without precedent in any other body of Christians in the known world; and as it cannot be proved by the scriptures that a woman has ever been ordained to the order of ministry; therefore be it enacted, that the bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church be and hereby are forbidden to ordain a woman to the order of deacon or elder in our church.[45]

In 1936, Martha Jane Keys, D.D. was licensed to preach in the West Kentucky

Conference. She introduced legislation to the General Conference in 1936 and

1940 for the ordination of Women.[46]

> The hierarchy of the A.M.E. Church was all male and only men could be ordained. However, as Grant points out, the denial of ordination was only one of many forms of the oppression of women in ministry. In addition to their not being granted ordination, the authenticity of 'the call' of women was frequently put to the test. [47]

In 1948 at the General Conference in Kansas City, MO women were permitted to

be ordained as Local Deacons.[48] Likewise, in 1956 at the General Conference in

Miami, FL women were permitted to be ordained as Local Elders.[49] In 1960, the

plight of women continued and at the General Conference in Los Angeles, CA

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[44] "History," Women in Ministry African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed May 17, 2015, http://www.amewim.com/display.aspx?wimhertory.

[45] Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River,* 137.

[46] "Notable Kentucky African Americans Database," University of Kentucky Libraries, accessed May 18, 2015, http://nkaa.uky.edu/record.php?note_id=2479.

[47] Hubert, "Testimony and Prophecy," 48.

[48] "These All Died in Faith: Women in the AME Church," Something Within.com, accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.somethingwithin.com/archive-amewomen.htm.

[49] "These All Died in Faith: Women in the AME Church," Something Within.com, accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.somethingwithin.com/archive-amewomen.htm.

women were ordained as Itinerant Elders.[50] In 1973, Rev. Dorothy Stephens

Morris became the first woman deemed the title of Presiding Elder.[51] Rev. Dr.

Vashti McKenzie was named the 116th Bishop in the A.M.E. Church in 2000.[52]

Undeniably the use of gender to control and deny access in the church is also spiritual

abuse. Although A.M.E. WIM has made significant strides in the last decade alone,

Womanist Theologians would argue that women are still victims of abuse due to their

gender.

> Womanist thinkers and liberationist theologians agree that power is the weapon
> used against women as a way of controlling and limiting their participation in
> influential roles. This holds true for public and private spheres. The institution of
> sexism as it lives and breathes today is fueled by the misappropriation of power;
> and when it is used to deny access, to abuse victims, or to protect wrongdoing,
> then that power becomes a vehicle for discrimination and a weapon for
> oppression.[53]

Women are not unique to church abuse, but male clergy has been subjected to

abuse by their superiors as well.

A.M.E. Clergy - Assimilation

Black preachers took on a valued role not just in the community of believers but

the community at large. Historian W.E.B. Dubois observed "the Preacher is the most

unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an

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[50] "These All Died in Faith: Women in the AME Church," Something Within.com, accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.somethingwithin.com/archive-amewomen.htm.

[51] Frederick Hilborn Talbot, *God's Fearless Prophet* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2002), 70.

[52] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2000* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2001), 12.

[53] Jones, "They Sought a City," 68-69.

orator, a 'boss,' an intriguer, an idealist—all this he is, and ever, too, the center of a

group of men."[54] Based on this quotation, William Becker argues that even slave

preachers were validated as men and leaders amongst the slaves. The slave preacher

symbolizes "self-assertive masculinity and integrity for the slaves who watched and

heard him."[55] However, as time progressed the A.M.E. Church and its preachers chose to

assimilate with the dominant culture in its training of its clergy that often created schisms

in the church.

John Walker argued that the post 1845 A.M.E. Church turned from the posture of

social agitation to assimilation due to the influence of Bishop Daniel Payne.[56] Daniel

Payne promoted sound educational requirements for ministers that included "systematic

theology, rhetoric, Greek and Hebrew. The title of Payne's advocacy was "Epistles on the

Education of the Ministry."[57] Although Bishop Morris Brown supported Daniel Payne,

this clergy education position almost split the church because many of the uneducated ex-

slaves ministers argued against the position. "Payne's 'epistles' were attacked as

infidelity. One minister accused Payne of being a 'devil.'"[58] When Daniel Payne upheld

education and deemed uneducated pastors as 'ignorant,' this stance created a visible class

system.[59] "Starting with the 1843 conference, a constant battle would ensue between the

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[54] Becker, "Black Church," 318.

[55] Becker, "Black Church," 318.

[56] Walker, "Morris Brown," 153.

[57] Walker, "Morris Brown," 151.

[58] Walker, "Morris Brown," 151.

[59] Walker, "Morris Brown," 152.

'learned and the unlearned,' resulting in 1849 in a near irreparable split."[60] Interestingly

enough, this rift is still in the A.M.E. Church. The church requires an undergraduate

degree to be ordained a deacon and a master's degree in divinity to be ordained an elder.

However, some bishops in the A.M.E. Church follow the letter of the church law, while

others exercise their prerogative in use of the missionary rule to ordain at will. The

interpretation and enforcement of the church law by the bishops of the Church results in

lack of consistency across the Episcopal Districts in the connectional church. Besides

education and gender, physical stature also played a role in defining ministerial

leadership in the A.M.E. Church.

> The AME Church leaders looked to the past for men who engaged in the strenuous life of the itinerant ministry, demonstrating bodily strength and intestinal fortitude. Historians in the AME Church remembered a golden age of masculinity to draw upon as a model for the present generation. The authors constructed images of the vocation of minister and life on the road that held up the itinerant preacher as the exemplar of true manhood. While each history had its own idiosyncrasies, a few general patterns emerge from the nineteenth-century narratives. Ministers illustrated masculinity by consistently overcoming challenging environments and situations, particularly hardships faced on the frontier, and having a large stature that demonstrated physical strength and a God-given manhood.[61]

This God-given manhood not only alienated female clergy but also undermined

the ministry of male clergy whose physical stature did not measure up. As a result

of clergy prejudices and vindictive practices across the connectional church, a

Minister's Bill of Rights was enacted to provide rules for bishops and church

officers to follow.

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[60] Walker, "Morris Brown," 152.

[61] Julius H. Bailey, "That Hardy Race of Pioneers: Constructions of Race and Masculinity in AME Church Histories, 1865-1900," *Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (2006): 8, accessed May 6, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

A.M.E. Minister's Bill of Rights

Bishops have sole autonomy in pastoral assignments. The Minister Bill of Rights was legislated in 1980. "The intent of the Ministers' Bill of Rights was to correct the practice of inappropriate or vindictive pastoral appointments. In the early days of Methodism, bishops had unlimited power; not only in Methodist churches, but in other denominations where bishops had the power of pastoral appointments."[62] Prior to the 1980 Minister's Bill of Rights, bishops would move pastors without any notification, even in the middle of the conference year. Pastors would also be moved outside of their current conference and in some instances to a lesser paying charge creating hardships for pastors with families. In 1980 the Minister's Bill of Rights were passed[63] as 'Bill No. 404 O' at the Forty-first Session General Conference[64] and in its original legislation were the following:

11. MINISTER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Preamble
A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL MINISTERS
We affirm, declare, and enact the following basic rights for the Itinerant Ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
It shall be the basic right of Itinerant Ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to:

1. **A Pastoral Appointment** equal to their abilities, training and experience. The new appointment shall be comparable or better than the prior one. He/she shall not be left without an appointment or given Evangelist or Missionary Papers

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[62] Calvin H. Syndor, III, "*We All Have a Dog in This Fight*," The Christian Recorder, *Facebook*, February 8, 2013, accessed May 19, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/TheChristianRecorder/posts/480434822015919.

[63] Vernon R. Byrd, Jr., "No. 2012-2016-17 Before The Judicial Council Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church; RE: In The Matter of Bishop Preston W. Williams," AME Church, 3, accessed May 21, 2014, http://www.ame-church.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/JC-Decision-2012.2016.17.pdf.

[64] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Combined Minutes of The 41st Quadrennial Session General Conference African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House), 205.

without the due process of the Ministerial Efficiency Committee of his/her Annual Conference.

2. **A Comfortable Parsonage** shall be furnished for himself/herself and family within the agreed means of the local church by the Trustees of said Church.

3. **The Occupancy.** Occupy within thirty (30) days the new Charge's Parsonage to which he/she is appointed. In case of a Pastor's widow(er) she/he shall be allowed ninety (90) days to relocate herself/himself and family, with the help and assistance of the Trustees of said charge.

4. **A salary not less than that** which is indicated on page 161 of the 1976 A.M.E.C. Discipline under the Section Titled "The Duties of Stewards", except in the case of Ministers receiving supplementary income from the Minimum Salary Department. The Minister shall be entitled to adequate Hospitalization, Social Security Tax, Medical and insurance coverage for himself/herself wife/husband and minor children under 18 or as long as it is documented that they are full-time students in an approved institution as indicated by the State Board of Education until age 21, provided the church is financially able. Some form of additional diversified coverage within the means of the local Church must be furnished between the Local Church and Pastor.

5. **Notice of Pastoral Change** – At least ninety (90) days in advance, of the Bishop's intent to move him/her to another charge without his consent, notice of such change must be given to the Pastor. Such intent by a Bishop must be in writing and indicate reasons for the same. His/her appointment shall be valid for one (1) year from date of appointment, and may only be abrogated for judicial cause, or mutual agreement between the Bishop and Pastor, or good of the congregation when certified in writing to the Bishop of the District with copies to the Presiding Elder and the Pastor, by the Stewards of said congregation and concurred in by the Presiding Elder and Bishop.

6. **His Dignity and Personhood** – No public or private indignities by his/her administrative superior against a Pastor's dignity and personhood will be tolerated. Such action would make the Bishop subject to the Charge of Maladministration. The privacy of the home and family of our ministers shall be respected.

7. **Publicly or privately seek the suffrage** of his/her colleagues for any office or position of the Church. He/she shall be provided the opportunity to address his/her brethren on behalf of his/her candidacy at the seat of the Conference for a time interval not more than three (3) minutes.

8. **Refuse to carry out an illegal order or act** demanded by his/her superiors without any penalty, professional or punitive.

9. **Be heard courteously** at any meeting, whether District Conference or Connectional, by any Presiding Officer. This right shall not be abridged.

10. **Transfer to Another Annual Conference.** A minister in good and regular standing shall not be denied the right to transfer out of his/her Episcopal District. On such a transaction, his/her Certificate of Transfer, shall be honored by the receiving Bishop. Open transfers shall likewise be acknowledged.

11. **Accept or Reject Any Voluntary Financial Obligation Assessments.** Each Pastor shall have the right to accept or reject any voluntary financial obligations

to the Connection, Episcopal District, Annual Conference, or Presiding Elder District, without pain or penalty whatsoever, either professional or punitive. He/she must, however, meet such legal financial responsibilities as may from time to time be enacted by the General Conference. Failure to do this makes him/her liable to penalties per Discipline.

12. **A descent and equitable retirement and pension system,** will be provided at least one-half of the highest salary earned by the recipient during his/her active years of service in the Ministry.

13. **Enforcement:** Denial of these Basic Rights to a Pastor shall make the offender liable to the Charge of "Conduct Unbecoming to said Officer; Maladministration of both." The aggrieved Pastor shall have the Right to present such charges through the Judicial Machinery and agencies of the Church as prescribed by the Discipline.[65]

In its inception, The Ministry Bill of Rights was for the Itinerant Ministers only. However in subsequent General Conferences, the Minister's Bill of Rights has been amended. In comparing the 1980 Discipline to the subsequent Discipline over the last thirty-two years the following modifications have been made:

- 1984 - Inclusive Language[66]

- 1988 - No Changes[67]

- 1992 - Deletion: Enforcement #13.[68]

- 1996 - Retirement #12. The pastors were previously entitled to at least one-half of their highest earned salary, however it was changed to the benefits of the pastor's annuity and retirement program established at the 1996 General Conference.[69]

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[65] A.M.E. Minister's Bill of Rights, from African Methodist Episcopal Church, *A.M.E. Church Discipline, 1980* (Nashville, TN: H. A. Belin, Jr., 1980), 187-189.

[66] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Book of Discipline: The Bicentennial Edition of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1984* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 1984), 119-121.

[67] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Combined Minutes of The 43rd Quadrennial Session General Conference African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House), 142.

[68] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1992* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 1993), 115-117.

[69] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1996* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 1997), 122-124.

- 2000 – Pastoral Appointment #1. If the pastor was found guilty under Judicial Administration, then there is no guarantee of appointment. Also the clause "when available" was added to pastoral appointment assignments. [70]

- 2004 - No Changes[71]

- 2008 - No Changes[72]

- 2012 – A Comfortable Parsonage #2. Provision for a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage is permissible. Notice of Pastoral Change #5. Provisions for a pastor to be assigned to a lesser charge was added[73], but a disclaimer was also given stating "Under no circumstances shall a Bishop negate the underlying purpose of this bill which is to protect pastors from arbitrary and capricious moves, or moves motivated by or intended to vindictive or revengeful."[74] There was an addition for Itinerant Deacons to receive a pastoral appointment however an Itinerant Elder can assume the same appointment without a 90 day notice.[75] The Enforcement clause was added back in that was deleted in 1992.[76]

What glaringly stood out was the deletion of the '#13 Enforcement' in 1992, but added back twenty years later in 2012. The motive of '#13 Enforcement' clause was to provide clergy a means to bring alleged infractions before the Judicial Council for due process. The whole intent of the Minister's Bill of Rights is summed in the addition in 2012: "Under no circumstances shall a Bishop negate the underlying purpose of this bill which

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[70] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2000* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2001), 124-126.

[71] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2004* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2005), 112-114.

[72] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2008* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2009), 120-121.

[73] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 100.

[74] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 101.

[75] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 101.

[76] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 102.

is to protect pastors from arbitrary and capricious moves, or moves motivated by or intended to vindictive or revengeful."[77]

Although the Minister's Bill of Rights exists to protect clergy and their families, however the bishops of the A.M.E. church also operate under the Doctrine of 'Godly Judgment.'[78] The Doctrine of 'Godly Judgment' states: "The bishop shall not have anything in this section (Authority of Active Bishops) applied which will prevent the bishop from using godly judgment in making changes in the appointments that are deemed necessary for the good of the church."[79] Simply put this allows bishops to use spiritual discernment in the assigning of appointments. However on the contrary, when used inappropriately, 'Godly Judgment' provides a means for the bishops to circumvent the intent of the Minister's Bill of Rights by stating 'God Told Me To Do It.' This becomes problematic when there is no criteria that defines 'Godly Judgment' and when what constitutes 'Godly Judgment' is purely subjective.

Conclusion

The perpetuation of the cycle of abuse within the A.M.E. Church partly has to do with enculturation. Oppressive behaviors have been witnessed and experienced and embedded within the culture of the A.M.E. Church. Unless collective voices continue to band together and rise up, then change will be difficult to take place. It is widely

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[77] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 101.

[78] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 118-119.

[79] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 118-119.

documented how the A.M.E. Church was birth out of the racial climate in the eighteenth century. However, after the formation of the A.M.E. Church in 1816 women were not allowed to be delegates to conferences, licensed to preach nor ordained into the ministry. It would not be until 132 years after the organization of the A.M.E. Church was established before women could officially be ordained in the church in the local ministry and 150 years before they could be ordained in the itinerant ministry. Sexism played a role in spiritual abuse of women however male clergy experienced a similar level of abuse through pastoral assignments.

The Minister's Bill of Rights exists to protect clergy from maladministration and the abuse of authority. The 'Enforcement clause' was absent from the Minister's Bill of Rights for over twenty years, which eliminated clergy's ability to have issues adjudicated with the Judicial Council. On the other hand, some bishops assert that the Minister's Bill of Rights protect ineffective pastors. "We have far too many church "assassins" on the prowl among us, cloaking in the shadows of the "Ministers' Bill of Rights."[80] Perhaps a more effective system of accountability and not oppression needs to be in place. The A.M.E. Church needs a connectional performance evaluation system across the church that establishes ministry goals with clergy with input from the local church so there is a clear expectation of what criteria will be used. This implementation may prove beneficial oppose to waiting for a crisis. The clergy can receive feedback at Quarterly Conference Meetings with the Presiding Elder. Regardless of what systems are in place, it is addressing the flaws of leadership and membership that will overcome spiritual abuse.

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[80] Calvin H. Syndor, III, "Editorial – Ineffectiveness and Incompetence – A Three Leg Stool," *The Christian Recorder*, accessed May 21, 2016, http://tcronline.blogspot.com/2009/11/christian-recorder-online-english.html.

Even within the church drivers such as economics, racism, gender bias, classicism

and religious convictions often play a role in spiritual abuse. This chapter examined the

nearly 200-year history of the A.M.E. Church and has concluded that social sin has crept

in and this destructive behavior is perpetuating. Now that the church has required a more

educated and theologically trained pulpit to complement a sophisticated congregation,

voices are not only rising up where there is disparity, but the Judicial Council of the

A.M.E. church is sought when infractions have occurred.

A couple of months prior to the writing of this chapter, a bishop in the A.M.E.

church appealed to the Judicial Council to interpret the Minister's Bill of Rights

legislation as it relates to assigning pastors new appointments because the law was

deemed ambiguous.[81] As a church it is imperative that the people of God resolve their

grievances within the church even if it involves the Conciliation Process or the Judicial

Council. The Bible admonishes in Matthew 18:15-17:

> If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when
> the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.
> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every
> word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member
> refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen
> even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Undoubtedly, abusive power is destructive and continues to create factions within the

church, however the more abuse is openly discussed the more others will become

enlighten and healed.

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[81] Byrd, "No. 2012-2016-17," accessed May 21, 2014, http://www.ame-church.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/JC-Decision-2012.2016.17.pdf.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Spiritual abuse is not a new phenomenon in the life of the church. Since biblical days, prophets such as Jeremiah spoke out against the people and the priest, from the least to the greatest, who abused the marginalized of society that is the stranger, poor, widow, and orphan. Spiritual abuse is a serious indictment against the church. It is a violation of trust that can lead people to a crisis of faith. Ronald Enroth indicates that when church leaders and even members violate trust, abuse authority and misuse ecclesiastical power to control and manipulate memberships the results can be catastrophic. It is catastrophic because the sacred place that should offer hope and healing may cause victims of spiritual abuse to question the role of God in their lives and their self-worth.

The average Christian defines the church as the community of Believers. The community of Believers is expected to operate and function in a manner that provides a nurturing environment. A member is attracted to a church for various reasons, but ultimately there is a yearning to belong.

> There is a search for community in the human spirit. This is more than the face-to-face interpersonal relationships that are so emotionally important to all of us. Rather community includes institutions of power and ideologies that shape and

control the very context of our lives. Institutions are centers of power that
determine the rules by which we live.[1]

The church is such a 'center of power' and the doctrine and discipline of the local church

emphatically attempts to influence and govern how we live. There are various forms of

abuse, but typically it is the misuse of power that leads to spiritual abuse in the church.

> Power means insistence on what we want for no other reason than that we want it;
> it means making other people follow us despite their own wishes. Power is
> assumed, insensitive, dehumanizing, and ultimately destructive. Authority, on the
> other hand, is positive, and usually involves a conferred right within strictly
> controlled bounds.[2]

If we serve an omnipotent God, that is all-powerful, the abuse of power in the church

may cause the theology of the victim and the abuser to question the tenets of their faith.

The victim may question, if God is all-powerful, then did God allow this abuse to happen

and why. "Church leaders are icons in whom people glimpse what God is like, whom

God values or blesses, and why. The abuse of power by church leaders, especially if

abuse is not named and limited by other leaders, indicates simply and demonically that

God is like the abuser."[3] Therefore biblical images of a holy God may become distorted.

An obvious image of spiritual abuse is broken relationships between the victim and the

oppressor and in some instances the church. Subsequently, broken relationship may also

be construed as sin. The response to broken relationships may be retaliation but healing

requires forgiveness. This chapter briefly highlights retribution theology and process

theology as a response to spiritual abuse, however minjung theology is presented in

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[1] James N. Poling, "Hearing the Silenced Voices: The Work of Justice in Pastoral Theology,"
Journal of Pastoral Theology 1, (1991): 14, accessed October 28, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with
ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[2] Enroth, *Churches that Abuse,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 100.

[3] Enroth, *Churches that Abuse,* 88.

greater detail because it challenges the victim to forgive the oppressor as a means to healing. Forgiveness is a necessary step in the healing process.

Retribution Theology

Retribution theology is God's actions of justice. Old Testament examples are typically given to support its ideology. ""Retribution" or "retribution theology" may be defined as deserved reward or punishment that comes to an obedient or offending party when a divine requirement, agreement, verbal promise, or covenant is kept or broken."[4] Retribution may be negative resulting in punishment, or positive resulting in a reward.[5] In the negative, retribution has been used to bring about justice for the victim.

> Justice became a matter of applying rules, establishing guilt, and fixing penalties - without reference to finding healing for the victim or the relationship between victim and offender. Canon law and the parallel theology began to identify crime as wrong against a moral or metaphysical order. Crime was a *sin*, not just against a person but against God.[6]

Vindication for the victim requires some type of punitive or justice behaviour. In dealing with the sin, rarely does justice bring about healing of the brokenness of the abused. Justice can occur without the transformation of the oppressor's or victim's heart. Retribution does not necessarily bring about remorse. Retribution also does not deal with

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[4] Larry J. Waters, "Elihu's Theology and His View of Suffering," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, (1999): 150, accessed December 4, 2015, *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.

[5] Waters, "Elihu's Theology," 150.

[6] Ted Grimsrud, "The Logic of Retribution and Its Consequences," Peace Theology, accessed October 15, 2015, http://peacetheology.net/restorative-justice/3-the-logic-of-retribution-and-its-consequences.

forgiveness of the sin committed against the victim. For forgiveness to occur both the victim and oppressor must have presence and a voice.[7]

> The victim must be brought into the middle of the discourse. So a vulnerable woman in the midst of a male mob exposes moral hypocrisy; a child in the middle poses a corrective against a universal adult obsession; a marginalised woman engages in profound theological discussion on the omnipresence of God; a half-caste in the centre role of a stirring parable shatters the myth of ethno-religious superiority; a despised woman announces the Christ through a stunning prophetic act, and so on.[8]

When the victim and the oppressor are at the forefront, "the ensuing cycle of repentance and forgiveness, truth and mercy, integration and community reconstructed to pave the way for justice and peace" will occur.[9] The assumption is the oppressor admits wrong and has a desire to pursue reconciliation. In some instances, it is naïve to reach this conclusion and often retaliation occurs when the oppressor's actions are called into question. "When abusers with authority interpret their own stories, they present those who seek justice as troublemakers. Having public authority, the abusers (not the unknown irritators) are believed. Thus, the abused learn that church leaders cherish neither them nor the truth so much as the abusers."[10]

An assumption is also made that the victim is empowered to confront their oppressor because typically the victim feels vulnerable and less hopeful that they have

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[7] Duleep de Chickera, "Victim Theology – Where Justice and Peace is Shaped and Articulated" *Anglican Community News Service*, accessed October 1, 2015, http://www.anglicannews.org/features/2013/11/victim-theology-where-justice-and-peace-is-shaped-and-articulated.aspx.

[8] Chickera, "Victim Theology."

[9] Chickera, "Victim Theology."

[10] Lauree Hersch Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority: A Believer's Church Perspective," *Brethren Life and Thought* 38, no. 2 (1993): 91, accessed October 27, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

the ability to do anything about their predicament. In these instances, the church is

accountable to the victim in exposing the oppressor. Even "passive cooperation with the

enemy aggressor amounts to betrayal, presence and voice with the victim demonstrates

faithfulness."[11]

> But church leaders may also stand with victims who suffer and seek justice that
> acknowledges the violation. Justice frees the abused and transforms the abuser.
> Justice begins with truth telling that holds offenders accountable, seeks restitution,
> and vindicates victims, freeing them from fear of more abuse or being blamed for
> the very evil to which they were subjected.[12]

The confrontation of the sinner is supportive in the New Testament ideology. In Matthew

18:15-17 provides a process to deal with the oppressor in the church.

> If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of
> you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take
> one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony
> of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if
> they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax
> collector.

The punitive action against the oppressor is permissible however the scripture supports

the confrontation of the oppressor and the church supporting the victim. The short fall of

retribution is that it addresses the sin only and not the remorse of the oppressor or

forgiveness by the victim. In order for the victim to move forward after spiritual abuse, a

redefinition of relationship with the oppressor, the church and with God may be needful.

Process Theology

One of the tragedies of spiritual abuse is the infraction of relationships. Process

theology addresses relationships. "Process thinking says that to be related to something is

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[11] Chickera, "Victim Theology."

[12] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 91.

to be internally affected by that something, and to affect something else in turn."[13]

Hence, as victims are affected, then God is affected. "If God relates to all the world, then human choices to damage others—be it humans, animals, or the environment - are felt by God. God feels everything that happens in just the way that it happens - God feels victims and violators."[14] Therefore victims may question the nature of a God that would allow spiritual abuse to happen and the victim's relationship with God may be compromised. Process theology offers an alternative for understanding God's power.[15] Process theology may address the victim's feelings of abandonment by God and it "will affirm both that God suffers with the poor and oppressed amidst their suffering, and that God is involved in their struggle for liberation."[16]

Survivors of spiritual abuse may struggle theologically and their image of God may only further the victim's duress. Some victims may image "God as a punitive father, God as having the power to bring about suffering, God as an impartial judge removed from and unaffected by the suffering of the world; God decreeing that violence is necessary to bring about a divine plan of love and justice."[17] In these instances, Sharon Bowland argues that process theology allows victims to reimage and re-conceptualize

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[13] Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "What is Process Theology?: A Conversation with Marjorie," 6, accessed December 10, 2015, https://processandfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/what-is-process-theology.pdf.

[14] Suchocki, "What is Process Theology?," 11.

[15] Sharon Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance for Older Survivors of Domestic Violence," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Online)* 65, no. 3 (2011): 1, accessed November 18, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[16] Jay McDaniel, "The God of the Oppressed and the God Who is Empty," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22, no. 4 (September 1985): 694, accessed November 18, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLAS*erials, EBSCO*host*.

[17] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 3.

God.[18] When the abuse happens in the church the victim may feel abandon by God and

subsequently their image of God may also be further compromised.

> "Did God allow this to happen?" "Why did God let this happen to me?" "What
> did I do to deserve this?" Or, "Is God punishing me?" These are profound
> theological questions whose answers are based in survivors' images of God, how
> they envision their relationship with God, and how they understand God's power
> in the world. Undoubtedly their religious communities also shape these
> understandings.[19]

In process theology, Jesus' Cross represents "that God is with us [the victims] even in our

deepest pain."[20] The victim may not feel abandoned by God. Also in process theology,

the victim in their own power as influenced by their beliefs decides the outcome. "We

[the victims] are responsible for dealing with the actual past received from the world and

the possible future received from God."[21] The victim has the choice to transform their

pain based upon the freedom to choose the future that God offers.

Sharon Bowland also suggests that interpretation of scripture can further victimize

the abused, especially if the abuse comes from those who are viewed as knowledgeable in

biblical interpretation. Sharon Bowland references Charles Hartshorne's work, a process

theologian, as a basis for victims to re-image God.

> God loves people unconditionally and desires to maximize the beautiful and the
> good for each second of life. Evidence of God's love is seen in the natural world,
> scripture, community, and relationships. In this framework, God is understood as
> a co- creator along with human beings rather than as merely a ruler and a judge.[22]

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[18] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 1.

[19] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 1.

[20] Suchocki, "What is Process Theology?," 12.

[21] Suchocki, "What is Process Theology?," 8.

[22] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 5.

In short, a God of love can empathize with the victim's struggle and pain and not merely justify the victim's struggle and pain. The victim may accept that a God of love will not forsake them even in the healing and recovery process.

Process theology may promote healing because "process theology challenges Christian faith traditions and survivors to rethink their understandings of a relationship with God, and second, process theology could provide useful insights on the role of forgiveness in the recovery process."[23] The victim imaging God as being with them through their struggles as opposed to the cause of their struggle may be liberating for the victim. Furthermore, forgiveness of self, others, God and being forgiven by God are intertwined.[24] Forgiveness does not automatically imply reconciliation of the relationship, but realizing that even the victim has the capacity to become abusive may provide a willingness to forgive. In some instances, forgiveness is delayed because of the deep-seated anger of the victim. This is explored in minjung theology.

Minjung Theology

The creditability of minjung theology has been debated since its inception around the 1970's. Minjung theology is viewed as the people's theology. It is "a Korean contextual theology of suffering people that arose out of the Christian response to the South Korean social and political reality in the 70s and 80s."[25] In the literal since, minjung is defined as the people, however, Andrew Park suggest minjung is the

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[23] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 5.

[24] Bowland, "Process Theology's Relevance," 6.

[25] Paul S. Chung, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, and Kim Kyoung-Jae, eds., *Asian Contextual Theology for the Third Millennium* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 1.

oppressed. "The Minjung are those people who have suffered from exploitation, poverty; socio-political oppression, and cultural repression throughout the ages."[26] The common denominator amongst the minjung is suffering attributed to abuse, whether it is spiritual, mental, physical or economic. The suffering is due to the action of others. For some scholars minjung theology is viewed as a systematic theology while other scholars such as C. S. Songs suggest it is a contextual theology. "Theology is not just concepts; it is the life of the minjung."[27] The theology of minjung is the matter of the heart, sweat, tears and laughter and not just social research, statistics and political planning.[28] "It was in 1975 that a new theology named "minjung theology" was born in South Korea. Professor Ahn Byung-Mu and Suh Nam-Dong laid the foundation of minjung theology and developed it. Dr. Ahn was a New Testament professor and Dr. Suh was a professor of systematic theology."[29] According to Kim the "so-called "minjung theology" was brought about as a "response to the minjung movement or the struggle for minjung's liberation in the 1970s

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[26] A. Sung Park, "Minjung Theology: A Korean Contextual Theology," Biblical Studies, 11, accessed November 17, 2015, http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/33-4_001.pdf.

[27] Chang Hee Son, "Han of Minjung Theology and Han of Han Philosophy: In the Paradigm of Process Philosophy and Metaphysics of Relatedness," Google Books, 54, accessed November 17, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=u7-SCzkMZgAC&pg=PR15&lpg=PR15&dq=haan+of+minjung+theology&source=bl&ots=IDK5SdP5o9&sig=qo2rwRFDvXppTarl-nB4ZrG-Zb8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwinopOtw8rJAhXLFz4KHTIlAeEQ6AEILDAC#v=onepage&q=haan%20of%20minjung%20theology&f=false.

[28] Son, "Han of Minjung Theology," 54, accessed November 17, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=u7-SCzkMZgAC&pg=PR15&lpg=PR15&dq=haan+of+minjung+theology&source=bl&ots=IDK5SdP5o9&sig=qo2rwRFDvXppTarl-nB4ZrG-Zb8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwinopOtw8rJAhXLFz4KHTIlAeEQ6AEILDAC#v=onepage&q=haan%20of%20minjung%20theology&f=false.

[29] Chang-Nack Kim, "Korean Minjung Theology: An Overview," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 85, no. 2 (1995): 8, accessed November 23, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

by a few conscientious theologians in Korea."[30] The primary tenants of minjung theology

are han and dan.

Victims of spiritual abuse experience han. "When the heart is hurt so much, it

ruptures symbolically; it aches. When the aching heart is wounded again by external

violence, the victim suffers a yet deeper pain. The wound produced by such repeated

abuse and injustice is han in the heart."[31] Often the victims feel there is no way out and

that they have no other options in life. When victims feel hopeless then resentment and

anger tends to set in and linger. The longer the resentment and anger lingers it becomes

han.

> "Han" is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of
> helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of the total
> abandonedness ("Why hast thou forsaken me?"), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow
> in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an
> obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong - all these combined.[32]

In spiritual abuse, the resentment is internalized and ultimately may lead to a crisis of

faith. Sometimes the wounds and scars of the heart are not always apparent and the

spiritual pain paralyzes and poisons the individual.[33] As the resentment festers it limits

the potential of liberation of the victim and healing. "The time-sense of the person

trapped in resentment is twisted around, dis-ordered, if you wish, for it desires two

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[30] Kim, "Korean Minjung Theology," 2.

[31] Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 20.

[32] Hyun Younghak, "Three Talks on Minjung Theology," *INTER-RELIGIO* 7, (Spring 1985): 7, accessed November 17, 2015, https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/3345.

[33] Kevin Considine, "Han and Salvation for the Sinned-Against," accessed September 30, 2015, http://newtheologyreview.org/index.php/ntr/article/viewFile/926/1210, 88.

impossible things: regression into the past and nullification of what happened."[34] The

goal of minjung theology is to address the han.[35] Han is address by dan. Dan seeks to end

the cycle of revenge and un-forgiveness of the victim. The goal is to live out the gospel

message as a "daily rejection of revenge and violence, both inward and outward."[36] "Dan

means to cut off the vicious circle of the Minjung's Han by exorcizing the evil spirit of

revenge against the oppressive rulers from the Han ridden of the Minjung (self-denial)

and by transforming the Han into the power of revolution for establishing a God's

nation."[37] Even though evil is present, the goal of dan is for the victim to not replicate the

han but take a stance to end it. "There is a need for dan in an ongoing way to transcend

the explosion of the vicious cycle of han, therein sublimating it to a higher spiritual

power."[38]

> The han / dan dialectic provides a very richly prophetic means not only for the
> identification of sin and sinful structures, but for their resolution through breaking
> the cycle of revenge through forgiveness and reconciliation. Through this process
> of dan resolving han the vicious cycle of hatred and revenge is broken and those
> once oppressed are delivered from the fate of becoming oppressors in turn.[39]

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[34] Paul Rigby, "The Victim in Ethical Theology: Emmanuel Levinas and Jean Améry," *Religious Studies and Theology* 26, no. 2 (2007): 239, accessed October 26, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[35] Park, "Minjung Theology," 3, accessed November 17, 2015, http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/33-4_001.pdf.

[36] Taurai Emmanuel Maforo et al., "Minjung Theology: United Theological College Contextual Theology Group Presentation," last modified 2013, 24, accessed November 17, 2015, http://www.slideshare.net/TAURAIEMMANUELMAFORO/minjung-theology-presentation-for-contextual-theology-class.

[37] Park, "Minjung Theology," 11, accessed November 17, 2015, http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/33-4_001.pdf.

[38] Chung, Karkkainen, and Kyoung-Jae, *Asian Contextual Theology,* 66.

[39] James T. Bretzke, "Cracking The Code: Minjung Theology as an Expression of the Holy Spirit in Korea," 330, accessed November 17, 2015, https://www2.bc.edu/jamesbretzke/BretzkeCrackingTheCode.pdf.

For the abused, it may be difficult to confront the oppressor, but for those who do

confront the oppressor in a revengeful or violent way may feel justified in their actions.

However, these actions are labeled as sin.

The Sins of the Victim and Oppressor

Acknowledging our sinful state and the need for a Savior is the crux of the

Christian faith. Sin as it relates to eternal life implies that we were incapable of saving

ourselves from ourselves and therefore a Savior was needed. This cursory view of sin

does not permit the sinner to take responsibility for sinful actions. There are complexities

to the human's bondage to sin as captured by Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra.

> Sin is primarily a religious and theological term and not a moral term. Sin is not primarily breaking the moral law, but rather breaking the relationship with God. It is not primarily immorality, but rather rebellion and estrangement. Thus sin is not the opposite of virtue or goodness but, rather, of faith (see Rom. 14:23). Sin is spiritual and not carnal, a matter of the spirit or self and its pretensions, rather than the body and its impulses. Sin is a state or condition rather than an act, although it issues in acts. Sin is neither essential to human nature nor a simple deliberate decision. The first takes away responsibility and the second belies the reality of human bondage and weakness.[40]

For the victim of abuse, it is whether they pursue revenge or accept the abuse without

confrontation that may also be sinful. "A related problem that affects all persons living in

situations of domination – including members of the privileged groups – is collusion with

systems of oppression, that is, acceptance of "the way things are" and denial of one's

ability to participate in their transformation."[41] The response to sin is transformation. The

wounded heart as a result of han maybe healed by transformation.

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[40] Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 152-153.

[41] Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology,* 154.

Andrew Park argues that sin is different from han. "When people are betrayed by those they have trusted, they become hopeless and experience despair. Children who have been abused often mistrust their parents and fall into hopelessness and despair. This hopelessness is not sin but han."[42] However, han can lead to sin. "But what happens to the doctrine of sin if we admit that damage, broken heartedness, han, anguish, all of the above are a precondition for sin? Or to put it differently, what difference would it make in our understanding of human sin if sin were rooted in han? Well, would it not make the doctrine of sin more realistic?"[43]

> Han can be at the base of sinful activity because han - as Andrew Sung Park [The Wounded Heart of God] has argued - is not only passive wound, but also resentment, the active desire for revenge or restitution. Han is dangerous, for victims of han have a ready-made justification for their actions. To claim that sin may be grounded in han does not make sin excusable —only more complex. And it may mean changing the tactics by which we deal with sinners.[44]

When the victim of han reacts in a revengeful manner it is sin. "The line between han and sin becomes blurred in their action and reaction."[45] When the victim of han actions become sinful toward their oppressor it should be addressed not by therapy only.

> The problems of the victims of sin have been relegated to pastoral counseling or to other psychological therapies; their pain is simply to be cured by counseling or therapy. The issue of victims has not been taken seriously at the level of theological doctrine. I am not suggesting that pastoral counseling and other kinds of therapy are not serious disciplines, but that the han of victims must not be treated simply as a pathological problem. The han of victims is a vital element in our understanding of the problems and the salvation of the world.[46]

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[42] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 16.

[43] Susan L. Nelson, "Pride, Sensuality and Han: Revisiting Sin from the Underside," *Political Theology* 7, no. 4 (October 2006): 428, accessed November 20, 2015, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host*.

[44] Nelson, "Pride, Sensuality and Han," 428-429.

[45] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 70.

[46] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 73.

"Since han sometimes causes individuals and communities to sin against the enemy, the doctrine of sin must be seen in relation to han."[47] Sin is willful.[48] Owning sin and the implication of sin can also lead to guilt and shame. "Guilt is the experience of oppressors, while shame in the form of disgrace is the experience of the oppressed."[49] Victims of spiritual abuse feel disgrace shame. ""Disgrace Shame" is a dynamic psychological force that can paralyze us developmentally, render us socially dysfunctional, and bring forth spiritual enfeeblement. This shame warps our self-image, on the basis of which we may perceive others."[50] Both the oppressor and the victim can experience disgrace shame, but the cause is different. The oppressor experience disgrace shame because of embarrassment of the acts committed, while the victim experience disgrace shame due to feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.[51] In forgiveness, there is no condemnation. In forgiveness, the guilt of sin has been removed.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness of sins and restoration of broken relationship are the crux of Christianity. Carnegie Samuel Calian defines sin as "a broken relationship between us and God - a state of separation."[52] The distance between humanity and God has been

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[47] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 74.

[48] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God,* 79.

[49] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 84.

[50] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 83.

[51] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 84.

[52] Carnegie Samuel Calian, "Christian Faith as Forgiveness," *Theology Today* 37, no. 4 (January 1981): 443, accessed November 27, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

bridged because of the sacrifice of Jesus' blood on the Cross at Calvary. The giving and

receiving of forgiveness for abused victims provides hope that renewal is possible. Calian

discusses basic elements of Christian forgiveness and suggests the learning of these

elements will lead to relationship renewal: The elements are judgment, love, grace,

pardon, freedom, reconciliation and healing.[53] Through forgiveness, Calian defends that

reconciliation and healing may occur.

> There are both vertical and horizontal dimensions to costly reconciliation.
> Vertically there can be no reconciliation without suffering for God; this suffering
> began prior to the incarnation. Horizontally for us, the suffering is found in the
> acknowledgment that we cannot forget the wrongs done against us by our
> neighbors as we go through the painful process of taking the first steps toward
> forgiveness. To recognize forgiveness as healing is also an admission that we
> cannot heal or forgive ourselves. The source of healing and forgiving is God.
> Forgiveness as healing recognizes our human limitations. The initiative always
> belongs to God; the source of healing resides outside of ourselves.[54]

The renewal that Calian suggests is only possible through understanding the depth of

God's forgiveness of sin. "The healing aspect of forgiveness reminds us of our fallibility

and fault."[55] In comprehending the vastness of God's forgiveness, serves as a basis of

extending forgiveness, which leads to healing. However, Calian does not suggest that

forgiving means forgetting the offense. This position is beneficial for victims of spiritual

abuse.

> Even if forgetting were possible, we would find ourselves radically cut off from
> the past, placing us in a state of amnesia. We are asked to remember the cost of
> God's mercy through our participation in the sacraments of baptism and the
> Eucharist. As we receive and remember God's costly mercies, we are motivated to
> practice costly reconciliation with others. "Forgive and forget" calls us to do the
> impossible, but God expects us to forgive without forgetting. That is why
> forgiveness involves a painful process. There is a cross at every forgiving

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[53] Calian, "Christian Faith," 439-443.

[54] Calian, "Christian Faith," 442-443.

[55] Calian, "Christian Faith," 443.

encounter; open wounds take time to heal. Forgiveness without forgetfulness is the human way of loving one another.[56]

In Calian discussion of forgiveness, he does not address the sins of the victim, however Andrew Park suggests that genuine forgiveness and reconciliation requires participation of both victim and oppressor.

> Forgiveness must take place in cooperation with victims and must involve offenders' participation in the dissolution of their victims' han-ridden shame. The one-sided forgiveness proclaimed by any authority is not forgiveness, but false comfort. Even though true forgiveness involves sinners' participation in the dissolution of their victims' disgrace by making restitution, such restitution does not guarantee that their victims will forgive them. An offender is required to have the sincere intention to love the victim, repent his or her sin, and assist the process of the restoration of the victim's dignity.[57]

True repentance requires the victim to have a change of mind towards God and a change of mind towards our neighbor.[58] Andrew Park suggests that the church's current doctrine of forgiveness is incomplete because it does not address the victim's forgiveness of the oppressor. Andrew Park references Matthew 18:15-17 as a model to incorporate for victim's forgiveness. "If the church were to encourage victims to follow this series of steps in response to their victimization, it could prevent many tragically sinful offenses within family, church, community, and nation."[59] The victim's act of forgiveness is a necessary step in the healing process.

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[56] Calian, "Christian Faith," 442.

[57] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 84.

[58] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 92.

[59] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 92-93.

Healing of the Spiritual Abused

Minjung theology requires participation with the abused to seek liberation.

Several techniques have been used in healing and communicating han such as

storytelling, poetry and church rituals. Healing in minjung theology often uses the power

of storytelling to lend a voice to the victim. "In stories, the Minjung accuse, challenge,

and lament the injustice of their society."[60] The goal of storytelling is to raise the

awareness of the abuse and is most effective when it is in the voice of the abused.

However, minjung theologians use storytelling as a dan technique.

> Minjung theologians begin to cherish the treasure of Minjung stories, to learn how
> to' listen to these stories and to use them for transforming Korean society. By
> hearing Minjung stories, these theologians experience their own transformation
> first; then they seek to share the stories with others. One of the important tasks of
> Minjung theologians is to be Minjung storytellers.[61]

Storytelling can be an effective and non-threatening way to describe the victim's han.

Theologians use storytelling to address han, but it has been discovered that Pentecostal

church rituals are effective as well. "One other important factor that makes people release

their han can be seen in the Pentecostal rituals: worship or practices such as all-night

prayer meetings or tongues-speaking."[62]

> Pentecostal minjung pray very enthusiastically, to the extent that they fast for
> several days, frequently in combination with overnight prayer. Minjung
> experience the releasing of han while they are striving to receive these blessings
> from God, regardless of whether they actually receive them.[63]

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[60] Park, "Minjung Theology," 9, accessed November 17, 2015,
http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/33-4_001.pdf.

[61] Park, *Minjung Theology*, 10, accessed November 17, 2015,
http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/33-4_001.pdf.

[62] Dongsoo Kim, "The Healing of Han in Korean Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7, no. 15 (October 1999): 136, accessed November 21, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[63] Kim, "The Healing of Han," 136.

The worshippers release their experience of han and oppressed feelings "through singing

so-called gospel songs (a kind of church rock music) while clapping their hands, weeping

in loud prayer and especially praying in tongues."[64] The church ritual affords an

opportunity of expression that may not otherwise exist. A distinction of Pentecostal

worship is speaking in tongues as what happen in the Book of Acts. Acts 2:4 says "all of

them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit

enabled them." Although controlled by the Holy Spirit, the speaking in tongues has been

researched as therapeutic.

> Tongues-speaking, a characteristic practice of pentecostalism, has something to
> do with the releasing of han, as David Kwang-Sun Suh has pointed out. Cyril G.
> Williams observes the releasing or healing effect of tongues-speaking:
> '[p]sychologically considered, glossolalia may be a release mechanism leading to
> a reorientation which could be of a permanent order. It is an energy discharge
> which can have therapeutic value as a reducer of tension and resolution of inner
> conflict.' The appropriate expression of this effect for Koreans would be the
> releasing of han. Put simply, Pentecostal rituals or practices release han.[65]

It is more than an energy discharge but the very act of worship that is releasing the han.

"When the pastor breaks the Communion bread, raise his hands in benediction, or leads

in prayer, the pastor is only doing what he or she does in counseling or other acts of

pastoral care – healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling those committed to the

pastor's care."[66] Research has shown that worship is therapeutic and a form of pastoral

care. "As the members of the congregation minister to each other, they first of all bring

their own personal gifts. And second, they participate in the gifts of prayer and worship,

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[64] Kim, "The Healing of Han," 137.

[65] Kim, "The Healing of Han," 137.

[66] William H. Willimon, *Worship as Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 24.

preaching, and the sacraments that are offered by the Church."[67] Edward Wimberly

suggests that worship is more than a celebration, but it is a time of involvement with the

sacred that leads to transformation. Pastoral care also occurs "when the emotional,

interpersonal, and psychological needs of persons are met in the context of ritual and

worship."[68] However, the transformation may be contingent upon the worshipper

acknowledgement of anger stemming from the bad experience.

> When bad things happen to good people, I know that acceptance is only half the answer. The other half is acknowledging anger and rage— learning to think them, to feel them, and even to pray them. That is what the angry psalms are for. That is what the liturgy of protest is for. To help us bring our anger and rage to God, even if it is God we are angry at.[69]

Pembroke suggests venting and praying our anger through the angry psalms. "There can

be no genuine relation to God unless we are prepared to be honest. To bring our raw,

tumultuous, and dark feelings before God is to relate in depth, on the level of reality and

truth."[70] In praying the angry psalms, the person goes from lament to praise. "When one

reads a psalm of lament, one cannot help but be struck by what is a very abrupt change in

mood. The poet takes us very quickly from angry protest into praise and hope."[71] The

shift from lament to praise is attributed to being reminded of God's deliverance in the

past and God's ability to do it again.[72]

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[67] Neil Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship* (London, UK: T and T Clark International, 2009), 1, accessed April 20, 2016, *ProQuest ebrary*.

[68] Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 25.

[69] Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship*, 76.

[70] Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship*, 75.

[71] Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship*, 80.

[72] Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship*, 82.

The embracing of these rituals may be use for the healing of spiritual abuse. The use of these rituals may renew and re-image God for the spiritually abused especially since the cause of their pain happened in the church; it provides healing within the church opposed to externally. Andrew Park also suggests that han can be address in four steps: awakening, understanding, envisagement and engagement.[73]

Awakening is when persons need to identify their han on a personal and a collective level. Personal han maybe the result of "family relations, personal traumas, and job-related issues."[74] Collective han maybe the result of "militarism, political tyranny, economic, exploitation and social discrimination."[75] The first step is to acknowledge that the han or the problem exists.

Understanding, according to Andrew Park has to occur on three levels, rational, intuitive and incarnational.[76] The rational level is depicted when "The han of a victim begins to move towards its healing and resolution when the victim begins to move towards its healing and resolution when the victim begins to grasp why the offender has committed such an offense."[77] Rational understanding allows the victim to use their han as a lens to understanding the han of other victims and it also challenges them to realize that at times the victims are also causes of other's han.[78] The intuitive level is when understanding does not try to rationalize han, however it attempts to empathize with the

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[73] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 138.

[74] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 138.

[75] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 138.

[76] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 140.

[77] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 142.

[78] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 142.

han of others so mutual understanding occurs.[79] The incarnational level occurs when "Incarnational understanding is to participate in the reality of han with the attitude of compassion and humility. In an incarnational understanding, the wound of han begins to heal itself."[80] For Andrew Park, the han of the victim will begin to heal when the motives of the abuser is understood.

Andrew Park states envisagement, a new worldview, is needed to "reform the systems that have produced han in the world."[81] It is optimistic to suggest that the bureaucratic systems would conform to a new world order, however Andrew Park suggests that the global church can impact change by being more missional and prepare for God's reign economically and by demonstrating global social responsibility.

> The church as a global institution ought to take a leadership role in reshaping a future world. The church is meant to envision "a new heaven and a new earth." If it does not dream of tomorrow's world, transnational corporations and governments will keep shaping the world by making capitalistic and nationalistic decisions for the future.[82]

The last step to Andrew Park's four-step process in the resolution of han is action. "Confrontation without understanding will cause unnecessary, hostile, conflict. Compassion without confrontation will result ineffective transformation. Confrontation with the heart of compassion for the oppressors will genuinely change their heart through creative tension."[83]

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[79] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 144.

[80] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 145.

[81] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 147.

[82] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 152.

[83] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 171.

The goal for Andrew Park is for true reconciliation to occur. It is acknowledged that the oppressor would hardly initiate the reconciliation process to occur because the oppressor's view of reality is only seen through their wrong doing until their understanding is raised.[84] "Victims are thus able to help offenders convert from their own iniquity."[85] Ultimately for healing to occur both for the victim and the oppressor require work.

Conclusion

When responding to spiritual abuse, the theology should address sin and forgiveness. It is easy to conclude that only the oppressor has sinned and is in need of forgiveness, however if the victim has deep rooted anger and a refusal to forgive then sin is occurring. If the oppressor refuses to change abusive behavior then sin is occurring. Reconciliation and retribution does not guarantee forgiveness. Retribution may allow the victim to feel that justice has been served, however the redemptive power of forgiveness may never be engaged. In understanding God's depth of forgiveness of our sins, process theology may allow the victim to rethink and reimage the abuse that has occurred. However, minjung theology challenges the victim's love to be inclusive of the oppressor. "Only forgiving based on love can change people's heart."[86]

> Reconciliation without repentance supports the abuser's addiction to the misuse of power just as does forgiving religious, power, alcohol, drug, child, substance, or other abusers. Such reconciliation is without mercy or grace. Mercy without truth telling is counter-dependent behavior, cheap grace that subordinates concern for

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[84] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 172.

[85] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 172.

[86] Young Hwan Ra, "Christ in Popular Culture in Korea," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 83, accessed November 20, 2015, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host*.

justice to achieving a false peace, a lie that hides truth. To forgive in the absence of repentance and a desire to change supports abusers and justifies their abuse. Until and unless the abusers are confronted with and recognize their responsibility, and seek help in establishing appropriate limits and new ways of responding to their inner compulsions, forgiveness supports existing behavior.[87]

Genuine forgiveness and reconciliation requires participation of both victim and oppressor. The challenge for church leadership is to expose the abuse so the behavior does not become the norm. The church should be held accountable to protect the victims and not necessarily leave the oppressor in positions to perpetuate the abuse.

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[87] Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority," 95.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Power and control are typically the drivers behind any form of abusive behavior. The tragedy for most victims is that the abuse has occurred from a trusted source. Thus making rectifying and recovering from the abuse problematic. When deciding to leave, the victim often weighs the loss of the relationship against the frequency of the abuse. In spiritual abuse or intimate partner violence, education and pastoral or therapeutic care are necessary parts of the healing process. Intimate partner violence is similar to spiritual abuse. This chapter presents recent findings of spiritual abuse and evaluates the intimate partner violence model.

Characteristics of spiritual abuse and the psychological and spiritual impact on victims are presented. Recovery from spiritual abuse is complex. Victims may be reluctant to reestablish relationship with the church and engage in spiritual and religious rituals that may provide comfort and relief. Furthermore, the question can be raised: how does the victim and abuser coexist in the same worship setting? In both instances, the abuse is coming from a trusted source that should provide security and stability rather than violent manipulative control techniques.

Lenore Walker, psychologist that developed the cycle of violence, has developed a psychoeducation model for battered victims called Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP). The Twelve STEP model and those aspects applicable to victims of

spiritual abuse are explored. The positive and negative psychological effects of using

spiritual and religious coping techniques are also presented.

Spiritual Abuse Practices

David Henke, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen are the foremost authorities

in documenting and addressing spiritual abuse. David Henke established Watchman

Fellowship, a Christian research and apologetics ministry, in 1979. David Henke's

research has concluded five characteristics of spiritual abuse including: authoritarian,

image conscious, suppresses criticism, perfectionists and unbalanced.[1]

Authoritarian personalities mandate a submission to a position of power. The

leader may claim God placed them in the position of power.[2] For image conscious

leaders, they keep secrets from members and cover up flaws that negate an image of

righteousness.[3] Other type of leaders suppresses criticism. Questioning decisions are

forbidden and issues are settled by the leaders only. Criticism is viewed as being defiant.[4]

Leaders who are perfectionist promote an elite, pious and arrogant attitude. When moral

failure occurs, the member is ostracized. Spiritual burn out may occur from trying to live

up to a high standard.[5] Finally, an unbalanced leader focus their ministry on specific areas

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[1] David Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," Watchman Fellowship, 1-2, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[2] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 1, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[3] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 1, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[4] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 2, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[5] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 2, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

thus claiming special status with God.[6] In addition, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen

have identified "shame-based" relationship as a set up for spiritual abuse as well. Shame-

based relationships are based on messages of negative self-worth and therefore create a

dependency of the victim on the system. Seven characteristics of shame-based

relationships are: Out-loud shaming, focus on performance, manipulation, idolatry,

preoccupation with fault and blame, obscured reality and unbalanced interrelatedness.[7]

Perhaps the church has a tendency to soften the spiritual abuse descriptors, however, use

of language such as power-hungry, unchecked leadership, intense intolerance and

individual diminishment to describe spiritual abuse paints a stronger image.

> Power-hungry, unchecked leadership - Individuals lack accountability, operate in secrecy, squelch dissent, set themselves up as ultimate authorities, and consider themselves immune to laws, rules and regulations. Intense intolerance - Religiously abusive systems do not allow for varying opinions, interpretations or expressions of faith and view those who do not conform in an increasingly negative (or even evil) light. Such systems thrive on separateness and isolation. Individual diminishment - Practices inadvertently or purposefully diminish self-worth, wholeness and freedom of individuals to make their own decisions and to develop their own beliefs.[8]

It can be argued that not all characteristics have to be present for spiritual abuse to occur.

Even taken one spiritual abuse characteristic to the extreme is a cause for concern.

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[6] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 2, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[7] David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 70-75.

[8] Melanie Childers, "Holy Havoc: Chaplains as First Responders in Healing Spiritual Abuse," *Chaplaincy Today (Online)* 28, no. 2 (September 1, 2012): 38, accessed March 7, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

Christians can inflict serious harm and injury upon others for several reasons including

lack of empathy, narcissism, dichotomous thinking, dissociation, and zealotry.[9]

The lack of empathy is an example of "evangelicals who try to minister without

knowing the sheep in an empathic manner will most likely injure it."[10] Narcissists believe

their thoughts are inspired by the Holy Spirit. "Narcissists simply assume that what they

think God thinks, and what they believe is Bible-based. … When you believe that you are

right and righteous, then all that you say and do is right and righteous. Any thought to the

contrary never enters the picture."[11] Dichotomous thinking occurs in abusive Christians

when "everything is black/white, this/that, either/or, us/them, good/bad, etc. … They

have the definitive Bible-based answer for every question, even when they have not

understood the question."[12] "Disassociated Christians are people who do not know

themselves and are afraid to know themselves."[13] Therefore disassociated Christians'

have distorted realities. "Zealots often commit much harm in the Name of Jesus because

they have tunnel vision. … They do not mean to hurt people but when people go through

life with blinders on they tend to run over others."[14] In many instances the abuse may not

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[9] Scott Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," Micronesian Counselor, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

[10] Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

[11] Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

[12] Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

[13] Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

[14] Nicloy, "Spiritual Abuse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.micsem.org/pubs/counselor/frames/spiritabuse.htm.

be mal intent but out of ignorance. The abuser may not intend to harm or hurt. However, Johnson and VanVonderen caution that when church leaders are exercising their authority it should not be construed as abusive.

Spiritual abuse is not when a church leader, given the authority, makes final decisions, confronts a member because of sinful behavior, removes an ineffective leader or removes a leader exhibiting emotional, physical, mental or spiritual problems, disagrees on doctrine, or enforces a standard of conduct.[15] Henke agrees with most spiritual abuse researchers that the tragedy is a violation of trust, which may result in a lack of trust of even legitimate leaders.[16] The fractured relationship may extend beyond the abuser and may ultimately result in a mistrust of God.

Ultimately spiritual abuse is a power issue, however in a dysfunctional church the abuse may not come from the pastor but it may be from a group of persons within the congregation.[17] It is not uncommon for influential families, group of church officers, or tithers to use their influence and money to control the pastor and get members to conform. Abusive behavior typically manifest when change is introduced. When change is resisted, control tactics are enacted in fear their position and influence might

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[15] Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 23.

[16] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 3, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[17] Jeff VanVonderen, "Spiritual Abuse: An Interview with Jeff VanVonderen, Spiritual Abuse Recovery Resource," Christian Recovery International, 4, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.spiritualabuse.com/?page_id=58.

diminish.[18] Regardless whether the abuser is the pastor, church leader or member the effects on the victim are devastating.

Spiritual Abuse Symptoms

After abuse has occurred, victims may be fearful, in denial, or even blame themselves. The danger is when spiritual abuse impacts the victim's spiritual beliefs and relationship with God. The victims "are not only in pain emotionally and psychologically, but also they are full of fear about God, thinking that they are in trouble because they haven't gotten it right, or been good enough, or been Christian enough."[19] Some victims cope with abuse through delusion. "Delusion is the distorted perception of reality, a totally unrealistic view of what is real. Conscious denial has to exist in a spiritual abuse situation in order to convince others that everything is fine, and also to fix blame away from the person or system."[20] Victims also are held captive by being irrational in their thought process.[21] "Individuals who have experienced unhealthy religion likely have multiple layers of loss, which may manifest as loss of physical and emotional health, loss of innocence, loss of trust, loss of world view, loss of relationships - including a perceived loss of relationship with God - and loss of self."[22] Even though the abuse is

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[18] Lauree Hersch Meyer, "The Abuse of Power and Authority: A Believer's Church Perspective," *Brethren Life and* Thought 38, no. 2 (March 1, 1993): 89, accessed March 2, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials* EBSCO*host*.

[19] VanVonderen, "Spiritual Abuse," 6, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.spiritualabuse.com/?page_id=58.

[20] Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 263.

[21] Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 263.

[22] Childers, "Holy Havoc," 41.

obvious, the victim is often trapped and will continue to be victimized whether they stay

or whether they leave.

Jeff VanVonderen confirms that the victims fear losing their investment in the

system. There is more to lose by leaving then staying. "They lose not just the investment

in the system - all the energy, time, money and emotions that they invested in getting the

group to function - but they also lose all their social contacts and all the extracurricular

things that are dependent on the group."[23] Thus the victim leaving is complicated and

anger becomes a normal response to abuse, "however, even legitimate anger, if not

properly channeled and dealt with, can degenerate into bitterness and cynicism toward

everything spiritual."[24]

Spiritual Abuse Healing

Recovery from spiritual abuse is possible. The process maybe long; there should

be an acknowledgement that the pain is real; and adequate time must be given for the

victim to reconcile their emotions with reality.[25] David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen

suggest a four step process: victim realize they are being abused, victim renew their mind

and way of thinking, experience safe relationships to heal and practice their new identity

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[23] VanVonderen, "Spiritual Abuse," 7, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.spiritualabuse.com/?page_id=58.

[24] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 4, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[25] David Henke, "Spiritual Abuse in the Bible," Watchman Fellowship, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/articles/cults-alternative-religions/spiritual_abuse_in_the_bible/.

in Jesus.[26] Healing may be a long process and a support group comprised of people with similar experiences would help in recovery.[27]

> It usually comes as a surprise to people who have been spiritually abused when they find that they have a lot in common with other victims. Distorted pictures of God and self, difficulty trusting those in authority, problems understanding and accepting grace are just some of the struggles shared. But since most have had so much pressure to not talk about their experience, they feel alone, even crazy.[28]

The victim maybe hesitant to seek help from their church and Melanie Childers recommends chaplains would be appropriate "first responders" to spiritual abuse. Chaplains "function outside the local faith community and provide support without an agenda toward a singular theological persuasion."[29] Perhaps the education of church leaders on spiritual abuse and its effects is needful. Education is the first step in prevention.

In "Transfiguration of Power," a question is posed to the church: "What kinds of education are provided for congregations regarding issues of abuse and which seek to insure safety and, at least, proximate justice for those who are objects of misuse of power?"[30] The key is education, education for the victim and for the abuser. David Henke agrees that naming the problem that exists in the church is important, but ultimately for the victim to forgive the abuser "the abused person must learn the true

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[26] Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 266.

[27] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 4, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[28] Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 46.

[29] Childers, "Holy Havoc," 37.

[30] Richard W. Carlson, "The Transfiguration of Power," *Ex Auditu* 10, (1994): 98, accessed December 21, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

nature of God's grace, love and forgiveness."[31] Both the abuser and the victim need

pastoral care. Another healing technique is to allow the victim and the abuser to tell their

story. Providing a means to tell their story, or allowing both the victim and the abuser to

be heard is necessary in the healing process. Through pastoral care, the victim needs to

face their trauma and the abuser needs to take responsibility.[32]

> With an intercultural hermeneutical paradigm as basis, the church has an
> obligation to listen to the narratives of both the victims and the perpetrators, in
> this space, to understand and to interpret them in order to assist them in finding
> meaning on their journey towards healing and wholeness. Victims, as well as
> perpetrators, need to actively remember their personal hurts, tell their stories and
> experience that they are accepted/respected/listened to, i.e. loved.[33]

By sharing and hearing each other's story, the victim and the abuser becomes a part of

each other's story and gain insight in their situation with the hopes of changing

behavior.[34]

> A person needs to have his or her experience heard, validated and named by
> another individual in order to begin the process of recovery. Telling and retelling
> the story of suffering enables the individual to feel less powerless and more able
> to separate him or herself from the experience.[35]

Therefore, "the church has to create opportunities for people to formulate and tell their

stories."[36] Moving forward from any type of abuse is challenging, however telling their

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[31] Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," 4, accessed December 21, 2015,
http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

[32] Christo Thesnaar, "Healing the Scars: A Theological-Hermeneutical Analysis of Violence from
the Perspectives of Both Perpetrators and Victims," *Scriptura (Online)* 106, (2011): 30, accessed
September 30, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*.

[33] Thesnaar, "Healing the Scars," 30.

[34] Thesnaar, "Healing the Scars," 30.

[35] Childers, "Holy Havoc," 41.

[36] Thesnaar, "Healing the Scars," 31.

story and being heard is a necessary step. The next section describes intimate partner

violence and how it mirrors spiritual abuse.

Intimate Partner Violence

Researchers have discovered that the topic of spiritual abuse most resembles

intimate partner violence. "Both of these abuse situations involve ongoing relationships

of trust and intimacy that, at least in some ways, have been voluntarily chosen.

Expressions of abuse in both contexts tend to include verbal abuse, emotional abuse,

isolation, control and thought reform."[37] The following section defines intimate partner

violence and the cycle of violence that victims typically experience. A psychoeducation

model for victims is also presented along with a recommendation of which steps maybe

beneficial to victims of spiritual abuse. Psychological findings of victims using spiritual

and religious coping techniques are also presented.

Intimate Partner Violence

According to the Center of Disease Control intimate partner violence (IPV) is a

public health problem. According to the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual

Violence Survey (NISVS), over ten million women and men in the United States

experience physical violence each year.[38] "An intimate partner is a person with whom

one has a close personal relationship that may be characterized by the partners' emotional

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[37] Childers, "Holy Havoc," 37.

[38] Matthew J. Breiding, et al., "Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements," CDC, 1, accessed December 30, 2015, http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/intimatepartnerviolence.pdf.

connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behavior, identity as

a couple, and familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives."[39] The driver is for one

intimate partner to gain or maintain power and control over another. "Violence can be

physical, emotional, sexual, economical, or psychological."[40] The abuse may be subtle or

covert:[41]

- Expressive aggression (e.g., name-calling, humiliating, degrading, acting angry in a way that seems dangerous).

- Coercive control (e.g., limiting access to transportation, money, friends, and family; excessive monitoring of a person's whereabouts and communications; monitoring or interfering with electronic communication (e.g., emails, instant messages, social media) without permission; making threats to harm self; or making threats to harm a loved one or possession).

- Threat of physical or sexual violence (e.g., "I'll kill you;" "I'll beat you up if you don't have sex with me;" brandishing a weapon)—use of words, gestures, or weapons to communicate the intent to cause death, disability, injury, or physical harm. Threats also include the use of words, gestures, or weapons to communicate the intent to compel a person to engage in sex acts or sexual contact when the person is either unwilling or unable to consent.

- Control of reproductive or sexual health (e.g., refusal to use birth control; coerced pregnancy terminations).

- Exploitation of victim's vulnerability (e.g., immigration status, disability, undisclosed sexual orientation).

- Exploitation of perpetrator's vulnerability (e.g., perpetrator's use of real or perceived disability, immigration status to control a victim's choices or limit a victim's options). For example, telling a victim "if you call the police, I could be deported."

- Gaslighting (i.e., "mind games") – presenting false information to the victim with the intent of making them doubt their own memory and perception.

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[39] Breiding, "Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance," 11.

[40] Nicole M. Overstreet and Diane M. Quinn, "The Intimate Partner Violence Stigmatization Model and Barriers to Help Seeking," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 35, no. 1 (2013): 109, accessed December 29, 2015, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

[41] Breiding, "Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance," 15.

Often victims of IPV are blamed for their abuse and or they blame themselves, especially

if victims stay in an abusive situation or they feel they provoked the abuser. However,

research has shown that social support networks are vital to the mental health and safety

of IPV victims.[42] Due to stigmas associated with IPV, victims may be reluctant to seek

out help. They fear rejection by family, friends and social networks. Nicole Overstreet

and Diane Quinn identify these stigmas as anticipated stigma, stigma internalization and

cultural stigma. Anticipated stigma is when victims fear stigmatization once others

discover they are victims of IPV. Victims expect to be devalued by others and fear job

loss, judgment from health care providers and being ridiculed.[43] Stigma Internalization

occurs when victims internalize negative IPV beliefs such as guilt and self-blame

ultimately lowering their self-worth. These feelings suggest they are not worthy of help

or of seeking help from IPV.[44] Cultural Stigma is when victims receive judgment from

family and friends for staying in an abusive relationship, or partner abuse may be the

norm in the community.[45] These are critical barriers that the victim may overcome in

seeking help and as a result the victim may continually be subjected to a cycle of

violence.

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[42] Overstreet and Quinn, "Intimate Partner," 109.

[43] Overstreet and Quinn, "Intimate Partner," 112.

[44] Overstreet and Quinn, "Intimate Partner," 117.

[45] Overstreet and Quinn, "Intimate Partner," 118.

The Cycle of Violence

The Walker's Cycle of Violence was initially introduced in 1979. "There are three distinct phases associated with a recurring battering cycle: (1) tension-building accompanied with rising sense of danger, (2) the acute battering incident, and (3) loving contrition."[46] Sometimes violence is not so apparent and research has revealed three forms of violence, structural, symbolic and direct.

> Structural violence refers to the violence and violation that arise from the unequal and exploitative relationships, which social structures sustain and nurture. Structural violence is not physical abuse but inequalities inherent in social structures (class, gender and bureaucracy) that make some more vulnerable and disadvantaged than others. Inequalities located in social structures could create conditions that nurture forms of abuse. Structural violence is invisible and silent.[47]

> Symbolic Violence is subtle but effective exercise of power which is embedded in terms, language and symbol systems. Symbolic violence serves to conceal the use of symbolic power. Symbolic power is reproduced by language and communication which often constitutes symbolic violence. One example is threats.[48]

> Symbolic violence is the experience of feeling out of place, anxious, awkward, shamed, stupid and so on because those who experience symbolic violence are both objectively unable to construct appropriate actions (because the resources necessary to do so are unavailable to them) and subjectively committed to, in the sense of recognizing, the very rules of distinction by which they are excluded and dominated.[49]

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[46] Lenore E. A. Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2009), 83, accessed January 4, 2016, http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

[47] Wijma Barbro, et al., "Cycles of Abuse Nurtured by Concealment: A Clinical Report," *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology* 28, no. 3 (September 2007): 158, accessed December 31, 2015, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

[48] Barbro, "Cycles of Abuse," 158.

[49] Chris Samuel, "Symbolic Violence and Collective Identity: Pierre Bourdieu and the Ethics of Resistance," *Social Movement Studies* 12, no. 4 (November 2013): 402, accessed December 29, 2015, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

Direct Violence: violence perpetuated by human beings against other forms of life and nature e.g. physical and sexual abuse.[50] It can be argued that structural and symbolic violence can be just as detrimental as direct violence. Structural violence is indirect and may be inherent in hierarchical systems, which breed politics and may use its sphere of influence to control the victim. "A violent structure leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and spirit."[51]

Symbolic violence "disempowers them [victims] by undermining their integrity as individuals. Loosing integrity and self-esteem leads to social suffering."[52] When a victim integrity is questionable then others willingness to help or get involve becomes limited. When help becomes scarce, the abuse is likely to continue thus placing the victim in a perpetual cycle of abuse. The victim may eventually mirror the behavior of the abuser and thus the oppressed become the oppressor.

Oppressed Becomes the Oppressor

The cycle of violence extends to the cycle of hatred and vengeance. "Wrongdoing begets resentment, rage, or hatred. These feelings drive violent reprisal. Reprisal in turn begets retaliation, and so on, driving the inexorable "cycle.""[53] This supports the rational of how the victim becomes the abuser.

> We see the cycle of hatred at work at every level of violence. It is a factor in
> intergroup violence. It stokes bias crimes. Perpetrators of domestic violence and

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[50] Barbro, "Cycles of Abuse," 158.

[51] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.,1996), accessed January 4, 2016, ProQuest ebrary.

[52] Barbro, "Cycles of Abuse," 159.

[53] Margaret Urban Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," *Journal of Human Rights* 5, no. 1 (January 2006): 81, accessed December 29, 2015, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

sexual abuse were often victims themselves, who experienced as children the dehumanization they inflict in turn. Crimes of hate have a past; sadly, they have a future, too, as each contributes to the climate of demonization and the desire for revenge. Perpetrators become victims, victims avengers. The cycle extends across generations.[54]

Although retaliation by the victim is a major concern, research has shown that a victim may seek justice that is not violent or retaliatory.

The study of victims' reactions and responses in actual cases, reveals that those offended or injured may, individually or collectively, value explanation, reassurance, validation, apology, and amends from wrong doers and communities rather than seeking to inflict damage on perpetrators in retaliation.[55]

Walker's research suggests this creates a burden on the victim to end the cycle of violence and there are "other alternative responses, retributive and non-retributive, [to] satisfy victims' needs for and rights to acknowledgment and vindication."[56] Walker acknowledges that anger, resentment and indignation are typical responses of a victim, but other feelings such as pain, anguish, grief, despair, fear, mistrust, shame, and humiliation are just as apparent.[57] Therefore, "victims will value and seek reassurance, safety, recognition of suffering, and appropriate placing of blame and are likely to want this from both offenders and others, whether or not victims desire or seek to retaliate."[58] The validation of the wronged and the victim's negative emotions are a necessary part of the healing journey. If not validated, the victim may feel re-victimized.

If the community or authority ignores the victim, challenges the victim's credibility, treats the victim's complaint as of little import, shelters or sides with the perpetrator of wrong, or worse, overtly or by implication blames the victim,

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[54] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 81.

[55] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 82.

[56] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 82.

[57] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 91.

[58] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 91.

the victim will feel abandoned and isolated. That abandonment is a "second injury" that can itself be humiliating.[59]

Research has shown that in some instances vindication is more important to victims than revenge.

> Vindication includes others' confirming the reality and the wrong of what has happened to the victim, acknowledging the victim's loss, anger, and suffering in its usually complex and multiple forms, placing responsibility clearly on the perpetrator and other responsible parties, and joining the victim in negative judgment, demands for accountability, and the search for corrective responses.[60]

The victim feels their creditability is at state when they are not heard or their offense is not acknowledged as wrong. Even if the abuser never admits wrong, it is crucial for the victim's wrong to be acknowledge by a trusted community. "It is to the politics of vengeance and the politics of peacemaking that we should look in understanding and avoiding cycles of violent and vengeful retaliation."[61] To avoid the cycle of violence and retaliation, Walker suggests that the victim's emotional response and the need for communal support is a first and necessary step.

Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP)

Lenore Walker has developed a psychoeducation program that "deals with how people think about what has occurred and how it affects their feelings and their behavior."[62] Since STEP is a psychoeducation program non-mental health care professionals may facilitate the study. The STEP program is based on feminist and

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[59] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 94.

[60] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 95.

[61] Walker, "The Cycle of Violence," 101.

[62] Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*, 283, accessed January 4, 2016, http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

trauma theory with the intent of empowering the victim to overcome the effects of

violence.[63] The goal of STEP is to disseminate information for the victim to learn a new

skill.

> Each STEP has three components: an educational section that provides
> information about some aspect of domestic violence and its impact on people; a
> discussion section where participants talk about and process what happened to
> them; and a skill building section where the leader teaches the women a particular
> skill that may protect them and help them heal.[64]

The STEPs to the psychoeducation program are:

> STEP 1 Definitions of Domestic Violence
> STEP 2 Overcoming Dysfunctional Thinking and Designing a Safety Plan
> STEP 3 Thinking, Feeling and Acting
> STEP 4 Changing to Positive Thinking and Managing Anger
> STEP 5 Stress Management and Relaxation Training
> STEP 6 Cycle of Violence and The Psychological Effects of Violence
> STEP 7 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Battered Woman Syndrome
> STEP 8 Grieving the End of a Relationship
> STEP 9 Effects of Domestic Violence on Children
> STEP 10 Learning to Ask for What You Want
> STEP 11 Building Health Relationships
> STEP 12 Terminating Relationships[65]

Since the STEPS program is psychoeducation and non-mental health professionals may

facilitate the program, then portions maybe transferrable to spiritual abuse. Since the

psychoeducation model is being adapted to the church context it will be referred to as

"psycho-ecclesial." Caution is taken not to include the feminist theoretical portions. With

adaptations for spiritual abuse, the following STEPs have been redefined for spiritual

abuse: STEP One, Definition of Spiritual Abuse; STEP Six, Three types of violence:

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[63] Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*, 284, accessed January 4, 2016,
http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

[64] Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*, 284, accessed January 4, 2016,
http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

[65] Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*, 284-285, accessed January 4, 2016,
http://Pepperdine.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=423629.

structural, symbolic and direct; STEP Eight, Grieving the End of a Relationship; and STEP Eleven, Building Healthy Congregation Relationships. Exposing victims to a psycho-ecclesial program equips them with information that helps victims understands abuse and the reality of what has happen to them. It also helps the victim to process their feelings of anger and take steps to move from being a victim. Facilitating workshops in a group setting is valuable because it allows victims to share feelings in a safe setting and it also reinforces learning new information in a discussion setting. It is important to incorporate the victims "'voice': to create an environment where they can speak, to listen to the silence and understand that it may conceal a narrative, and to ask different and open questions about abusive experiences."[66] A group setting may make it easier to share because victims will address their shame and understand they are not alone in their abuse. A discussion on a healthy congregation would be beneficial because it provides a benchmark to compare their current experiences.

Spiritual Coping Technique

In a study of adults that survive sexual assault, spiritual coping has negative and positive outcomes.[67] Spirituality as a coping strategy includes "cognitive and behavioral strategies (beliefs and rituals such as prayer and pastoral counseling) as well as organized religious involvement and personal spiritual ideology."[68]

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[66] Barbro, "Cycles of Abuse," 159.

[67] Terry Lynn Gall, "Spirituality and Coping with Life Stress Among Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 30, no. 7 (2006): 829, accessed January 3, 2016, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

[68] Thema Bryant-Davis, "Coping Strategies of African American Adult Survivors of Childhood Violence," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 36, no. 4 (August 2005): 411, accessed January 6, 2016, *PsycARTICLES,* EBSCO*host*.

> Negative forms of spiritual coping (e.g., spiritual discontent) tend to be related to greater distress, while more positive forms of spiritual coping (e.g., spiritual support) were related to less distress. For instance, spiritual discontent coping was related to greater depressive mood, while active surrender coping and religious forgiveness coping (i.e., seeking God's help to relinquish negative emotion) were associated with lower levels of depressive mood.[69]

On the contrary, another research project revealed use of religious coping by sexually abused victims reported higher depressive and PTSD symptoms.[70] The victims "may have used negative religious coping, which entails adoption of beliefs that God is punishing them, that one should passively wait for God to change the situation, that the individual has failed in their faith, and that prayer is a tool for avoidance."[71] However, the victim is engaging in religious practice as a coping mechanism because they have PTSD symptoms.[72] Studies have also shown that victims may benefit depending on what religious coping technique is used.

> They [trauma victims] may also experience emotional release by being in a context (during expressive services or in private) where it is acceptable for one to cry, shout, or, in some cases, dance. Spiritually, trauma survivors have indicated the helpfulness of knowing there is someone (e.g., their higher power) who believes them and with whom they can talk about experiences that seem unspeakable to another human being.[73]

The negative outcomes of religious coping techniques may further exasperate a spiritual abuse victim. Therefore, care should be given so as to not re-victimize.

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[69] Gall, "Spirituality and Coping," 829.

[70] T. Bryant-Davis et al., "Surviving the Storm: The Role of Social Support and Religious Coping in Sexual Assault Recovery of African American Women," *Violence Against Women* 17, no. 12 (2011): 1612, accessed January 3, 2016, *Academic Search Alumni Edition*, EBSCO*host*.

[71] Bryant-Davis et al., "Surviving the Storm," 1612.

[72] Bryant-Davis et al., "Surviving the Storm," 1613.

[73] Bryant-Davis et al., "Surviving the Storm," 1613.

Conclusion

Adaptation of Lenore Walker's psychoeducation STEP program may prove beneficial to religious organizations. Creating awareness of spiritual abuse through review of characteristics and examples may sensitize pastors, church leaders and members to the seriousness of the abuse. Some churches may negate spiritual abuse especially if the act is not sexual or a result of direct violence however in an episcopal form of church government it is needful to defined structural and symbolic violence as sources of spiritual abuse as well.

Recovery from abuse will not happen overnight. David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen suggest a four-step recovery process for spiritual abuse and Walker recommends a twelve STEP psychoeducation program for recovery from the cycle of violence. Addressing spiritual abuse in a psychoeducation group setting may create an environment where it is conducive for the victim and the abuser to listen and to also share their stories. The attractiveness of Walker's psychoeducation program is non-mental health professionals may facilitate the study. The three components that engage the participants: (1) educational component, (2) discussion component and (3) skill component also reinforces the learning. Over a course of time, the participants may also start to develop a covenant and a trust, which may bring a greater degree of sharing and learning from each other.

From a victim perspective, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen speak to a new identity in Christ which may prove helpful for those victims who struggled in their relationship with God as the abuse was occurring. It is also helpful for the participants to understand what a healthy congregation looks like and how to set appropriate boundaries

in relationships even within the church. Finally caution should be taken when using spiritual coping techniques in the recovery process for they may prove healing or they may also prove detrimental if the victim feels they have failed in their faith.

Intervention in instances of spiritual abuse is important. It may help stop the revolving doors of churches, help victims recover and create a healthier church environment for members to thrive and grow spiritually.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

It is my opinion that clergy, the church leadership, and the membership have engaged in unhealthy and abusive relationships. The context is a one hundred seventy-three (173) year old Methodist church with an episcopal form of government. Spiritual abuse is a serious offense to God and damaging to God's flock. There has been a constant churn in pastors and the church members who were scattered like sheep without a caring shepherd. Writing anonymous threatening letters, disrespecting pastors and members, withholding tithes and offering, turning off utilities, and concentrating power and leadership positions to a select few are all characteristics of abuse. There were instances when the pastor was relegated to merely preaching, teaching Bible study, and visiting the sick, while the laity managed the business and financial affairs. This division of responsibility encouraged a power imbalance.

When a local church has this form of power imbalance, it can create a tense environment between the pastor and the church leadership. In a connectional church, the pastor is held accountable by presiding elders and bishops for all plant concerns of the church. The control and power issues in the local church affected the church's ability to sustained ministry and membership. The plant was in debt and unable to meet financial obligations and thus, it was difficult to garner the trust of the congregation, and raise enough funds to meet payroll, plant and connectional budget obligations. The situation

was stressful and created a hostile environment and abusive behavior resulted. Though

the abuse may not be physical and violent in nature, the effects are just as harmful. It can

be argued that the abuse is even more harmful because it is happening in a spiritual

context, i.e. a church, an environment that should indoctrinate the love of Jesus.

Therefore, to remedy the abuse that was experienced, the church would benefit from a

psycho-ecclesial model that educates church leaders and members on spiritual abuse.

Church leadership being educated on spiritual abuse would be a necessary step to

prevention. The education on spiritual abuse would also address the pastoral care,

spiritual formation, stewardship, and leadership training needs.

The goal of this project was to educate church leaders about spiritual abuse.

Awareness was the first step in prevention. The project was four sessions that included

(1) a project orientation; (2) a session defining spiritual abuse; (3) a session defining a

healthy church congregation; and (4) a session defining ways to recover from spiritual

abuse. The effectiveness of the model was evaluated by using the following data

collection methods: pre and post surveys, questionnaires, and spiritual narratives.

Methodology

The research model implemented was "psycho-ecclesial" and was based on the

psychoeducation concept derived from a therapeutic modality. This therapeutic model

was an intervention technique based on disseminating information and learning new

skills. The psycho-ecclesial program aided participants to understand the definition of

spiritual abuse and think through the negative effects of spiritual abuse related to feelings

and behavior. In addition, the psycho-ecclesial program identified positive approaches to

resolving conflict. The model used Bible study, breakout sessions, role-playing, self-assessment questionnaire, and spiritual narratives. Various techniques were used to engage the participants with the teachings.

Psychologist Lenore Walker developed a psycho-educational model called the Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP) for women who suffered from intimate partner violence. Due to intimate partner violence closely mirroring spiritual abuse, components of the STEP model were used as foundation for the psycho-ecclesial program. The following STEPs were redefined and adapted to the "psycho-ecclesial" model: STEP One, Definition of Spiritual Abuse; STEP Six, Three types of violence: structural, symbolic, and direct; STEP Eight, Grieving the End of a Relationship; and STEP Eleven, Building Healthy Congregation Relationships. STEP One, Six, Eight, and Eleven were discussed in the different sessions. To maintain the integrity of Lenore Walker's psychoeducational STEP model, each session had an education, discussion, and a skill component. Initially, the targeted participants were church officers; however, an appeal was made to the entire congregation during worship service announcements and official church board meetings to take part in the study. The desired outcome was for participants to have a better knowledge of spiritual abuse and be able to implement preventative and healing techniques.

Implementation

The participants took part in four sessions and a special Saturday session which focused on orienting them to the project, defining spiritual abuse, exploring the dynamics of a healthy church congregation, and learning techniques to recover from spiritual abuse.

Each session opened with a devotion that included a prayer and a song. There was a total of ten participants, one a context associate, and one professional associate. Four of the ten participants also attended the Saturday session. During the Project Orientation, the participants filled out a demographic form found in Appendix B. The participants include seven females (70%), three males (30%), three Stewards – church leaders (30%), three Trustees – church leaders (30%), one Minister of Music – staff member (10%), one member (10%), one Stewardess – church leader (10%), and one Christian Education Director – church leader (10%). The average age was fifty-eight point-five-years-old and the average length of membership at the church was thirty-point-four years. Of note, one participant was a church employee and not a member, when excluded the average length of church membership was thirty-four-point-twenty-five years. Five of the participants have family members at the church, three did not, and two did not respond to the question. All participants were active in a ministry and six ministries were represented, which included choir, church school, Christian education, tutoring, missionary, and men's ministry. None of the participants had ever left the church.

Project Orientation

After a brief devotion, a power point presentation was reviewed with the participants (See Appendix A). The psycho-ecclesial ministry model was explained to the participants and directions were given on the pre-course work for the spiritual narrative. They were provided with a definition of spiritual abuse and were requested to answer the following questions individually: (1) Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse? (2) As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God

and if yes, then how? (3) As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe; other – consider leaving or did leave? (4) Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you? An overview of the remaining sessions was given followed by an explanation of how the project would be evaluated. The demographic and consensus form was filled out and a unique number was assigned to each participant so that their work would remain anonymous. I was careful to make sure participants' names remained anonymous. Appendix B provides information on the spiritual narrative and demographic and consensus forms. The remaining three sessions were outlined as follows.

Session One, What is Spiritual Abuse?

       Session One included a brief devotion with a review of the power point presentation (See Appendix C). Topics covered and completed were: a self-assessment exercise, biblical example based on Jeremiah, spiritual abuse case study, discussion of forms of violence, and the impact spiritual abuse has on the church and victim. The participants were reminded of the purpose of the psycho-ecclesial model, and an overview of spiritual abuse was given prior to the self-assessment exercise, "Have I Been Religiously Abused?" was administered and collected.[1] The self-assessment found in Appendix C had a total of twenty-two questions with the following breakdown: have I been abused, consisted of ten questions; impact on my relationship with God, six questions; and effect of abuse: depression, stress, etc., six questions.

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[1] Jack Watts, *Recovering From Religious Abuse* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2011), 2-5.

The next phase of session one engaged the participants in a Bible study on Jeremiah to give a biblical understanding of spiritual abuse. After an overview of the prophet Jeremiah, a volunteer was asked to read Jeremiah 6:13 – 15 and Jeremiah 5:26 – 31. Based on the Jeremiah text, the following themes were explored: (1) abuse of spiritual authority; (2) covetousness; and (3) deceit: lying preacher. The participants understood that spiritual abuse is a power and control issue and all maybe involved in the act of abuse, clergy and congregation. This phase was concluded with a discussion on "What Spiritual Abuse is Not."[2]

Next the participants were broken up into two groups and each was given a case study (See Appendix C). Group A was given "Abusive Churches: A View From Within"[3] and group B was given "Laity Hurting Laity."[4] Each group was asked to (1) identify and present the spiritual abuse that occurred, (2) identify any common spiritual abuse characteristic[5], (3) the power and control issue, and (4) any observations. This exercise generated a lot of discussion from both groups and it concluded with how abuse is not limited to clergy but also that laity can abuse laity. The session then moved to discussing the various types of violence. The rational was to demonstrate that sometimes violence is inherent in the way a church is structured especially if there is an episcopal form of government. Finally, the impact of spiritual abuse was presented. The objective

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[2] David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 23.

[3] Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 9.

[4] Willie Eugene Marshall, *Putting My Stuff in the Past* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015), 3-4.

[5] David Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," Watchman Fellowship, 1-2, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/spiritualabuseprofile.pdf.

was to convey that spiritual abuse impacts the church plant, congregation, the victims and

perpetrators. Essentially, spiritual abuse has a rippling and lasting effect unless addressed.

Session one concluded with a closing prayer.

Session Two, What is a Healthy Church Congregation?

After a brief devotion, the power point presentation was reviewed with the

participants (See Appendix D). Topics covered in session two focused on reviewing the

definition of spiritual abuse, discussing characteristics of a healthy church congregation

using First Peter 5:1-5 as a biblical example, and identifying strategies for effective

conflict confrontation. The participants viewed the first nine (9) minutes of a video,

"Spiritual Abuse – How to Identify It (Matthew 20:26-28)," as a review.[6] The video was

used to appeal to different learning styles. Based on the video, the researcher and the

participants discussed the difference between using influence for persuasion versus

manipulation for control. The video also transitioned the discussion to exploration of a

healthy church by introducing the concept of a servant leader as one who points others to

"God's grace, love, and the Holy Spirit for transformation."[7] The participants were led in

a Bible study on First Peter 5:1-5 as a foundation for a healthy church congregation. After

a synopsis of Peter and his failure in his relationship with Jesus when Peter denied

knowing Jesus, the researcher shared how Jesus lovingly and compassionately restored

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[6] Richard Bustraan, "Spiritual Abuse – How to Identify It (Matthew 20:26-28)" (video), last modified May 15, 2016, accessed September 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3mllQxJylA.

[7] Bustraan, "Spiritual Abuse" (video), accessed September 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3mllQxJylA.

their relationship as found in John 21:15-19. Thus, the concept of a shepherd – sheep

relationship was introduced as Peter described in First Peter 5:1-5.

To further understand the shepherd – sheep concept a volunteer read the text

while emphasizing key points. First Peter 5:1, the role of elder is not limited to the pastor

and in general may refer to mature church leaders. Subsequently, it is the duty of the

pastor along the church leaders to care for the congregation. In First Peter 5:2-3, the

imagery and role of shepherd to sheep was discussed with the participants. Emphasis was

given that a shepherd does not willingly expose sheep to danger or abuse. The motives of

a shepherd were reviewed and how the shepherd should serve as an example to emulate.

First Peter 4:5, all, shepherd and sheep, should humble themselves and have mutual

respect for one another.

Next, the participants were broken into two groups and given Ezekiel 34:2-6 to

discuss, 'What a Shepherd of God's flock should not do?' Each group reported their

findings and concluded that the sheep had been neglected and battered and the shepherd

was self-serving. Ten characteristics of a healthy church as defined by Stephen Macchia

were reviewed and then the participants engaged in the strategies for conflict resolution

discussion.[8]. Appendix D provides the characteristics of a healthy church.

The strategies for conflict resolution were based on findings from "Confronting

Without Offending."[9] A distinction was made between confrontation and retaliation, and

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[8] Stephen A. Macchia, "Characteristics of a Healthy Church," Leadership Transformation Inc., accessed September 20, 2016, http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/characteristics-of-a-healthy-church.htm.

[9] Deborah Smith Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009).

the importance of knowing whether the situation warrants being confronted.[10] The

participants then engaged the biblical text to understand godly confrontation.[11] Proverbs

19:1 was used to look over one-time versus pattern of behavior. Matthew 5:23-24 was

used to help the participants understand that you can be the offender; and Matthew 18:15

you can be the offended. The following conflict management styles were then reviewed:

The Dictator – "Do It My Way;" The Accommodator – "Have It Your Way;" The

Abdicator – "I'll Run Away;" and The Collaborator – "Let's Find a Way."[12] After the

review of conflict management styles, each participant was given one of the steps below

to read and present their findings to the group: Preparing for the Encounter, Owning the

Problem, Speaking the Right Words, Listening, Negotiating Future Behavior and

Releasing the Offender.[13] The group applied the six steps above to Second Samuel 12:1-

15. The scripture described when the Prophet Nathan confronted King David about his

adulterous behavior with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. Session two

concluded with participants filling out a questionnaire to assess their knowledge of

spiritual abuse and healthy congregation (See Appendix D). The final session, focused on

teaching about spiritual abuse recovery aids.

Session Three, Spiritual Abuse Recovery Aids

      After a brief devotion, the power point presentation was reviewed with the

participants (See Appendix E). Topics covered in this session were a review of spiritual

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[10] Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending,* 16-19.

[11] Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending,* 25.

[12] Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending,* 29-48.

[13] Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 67-108.

abuse and strategies for effective conflict confrontation and spiritual abuse recovery aids.

The self-assessment exercise was given a second time. A new definition of spiritual abuse

was shared with the participants using the following acrostic: A – Acting spiritual to B –

Benefit oneself by U – Using S – Self-centered E – Efforts to control others. The six steps

of effective conflict negotiation were also reviewed and the purpose was to reinforce

learnings from the previous session.[14]

The spiritual abuse recovery aids were introduced by warning participants that

there is no cookie cutter approach to recovery and the process may vary per victim. The

difficult part of recovery is to stay in relationship with God if the victim is struggling

with a belief that God allowed the abuse to happen. The goal of recovery is to transition

to a place of strength. The participants were advised that the primary steps of recovery

are to acknowledge the abuse occurred and to ultimately reach a place of forgiveness. To

illustrate how to reach a place of forgiveness, the participants engaged in a forgiveness

exercise (See Appendix E).

This portion of session three was primarily lectured and details of each recovery

aid are shared in Appendix E. The recovery aids discussed were: spiritual and emotional

transitions; recovery from churches that abuse; role of confidants; storytelling; spiritual

coping ritual; Minjung Theology – Theology of the Oppressed; acceptance; and

relationship ending. Session three ended with administering the self-assessment exercise,

"Have I Been Religiously Abused?" (See Appendix C). The purpose of administering the

exercise a second time after the final session was to measure any response changes. The

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[14] June Hunt, *Spiritual Abuse: Breaking Free from Religious Control* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing Aspire Press, 2015), 12.

session closed with prayer and the participants were thanked for their involvement in the study.

Summary of Learning

A qualitative model was used to collect the data. An ethnographic study comprised of church leaders and members was use to implement the four-session psycho-ecclesial program. The purpose of this ethnography study is to educate the participants on what spiritual abuse is and discover the impact it has on the participants. For the purpose of this research, spiritual abuse is defined as:

> The mistreatment of a person by someone in a position of spiritual authority, resulting in the diminishing of the person's sense of well-being and growth – both spiritually and emotionally. This spiritual authority is used to manipulate others for personal gain or to achieve a personal agenda, thereby harming that person's walk with God.[15]

During the course of the study, this definition was supplemented to include ways members not in an official spiritual authority position may also abuse other church members, hence members abusing members. A mixed methods approach was used to collect the data for evaluation: (1) Self-Assessment, "Have I Been Religious Abused?" – Pre and Post Survey quantitative data collection method; (2) Spiritual Abuse /Healthy Congregation Questionnaire – Test data collection method; (3) Spiritual Narratives – Testimonial data collection method; and (4) Forgiveness Exercise – Testimonial data collection method. The triangulation of this data uses all four data collections.

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[15] Jack Watts, *Recovering from Religious Abuse* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2011), 2.

Pre and Post Self-Assessment Have I Been Religiously Abused?

The self-assessment exercise has twenty-two questions, and it was recommended that if a score is 101 or higher then spiritual abuse was likely.[16] All the participants scored less than 101 except for one participant who scored greater than 150. To achieve the minimal total score of 101, participants average score per question would be four point six. However, for this study the following questions were grouped accordingly:

Table 1. Question categories, "Have I been religiously abused?"

Question Category	Total #	Question #
Have I been abused	10 questions	1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10,11, 12, 13
Impact on my relationship with God	6 questions	3, 6, 14, 15, 17, 22
Effect of abuse: depression, stress, etc.	6 questions	4, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21

A Likert Scale was used for both the pre- and post-surveys. The tool measured on a scale from one to ten, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The participant will evaluate whether (1) the participants have been abused; (2) the impact the abuse had on their relationship with God; and (3) if the abuse caused an effect on the participant. The mnemonic for the tables are Q# One is Question #One, and Par # One is Participant # One.

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[16] Watts, *Recovering from Religious Abuse*, 6.

Table 2. Pre-survey results, Have I been abused

	Q# 1	Q# 2	Q# 5	Q# 7	Q# 8	Q# 9	Q# 10	Q# 11	Q# 12	Q# 13	Total
Par #1	0	1	8	9	3	3	9	3	7	3	46
Par #2	3	1	8	10	3	3	8	1	0	3	40
Par #3	3	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Par #4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par #5	0	0	5	5	1	3	6	3	7	8	38
Par # 6	10	10	8	10	10	8	9	10	8	7	90
Par # 9	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	1	14
Par # 12	0	0	4	5	0	2	8	0	0	0	19
Par # 14	0	0	5	8	0	0	0	7	0	7	27
Par # 16	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total	21	20	51	47	17	20	41	25	27	29	

Table 3. Post-survey results, Have I been abused

	Q# 1	Q# 2	Q# 5	Q# 7	Q# 8	Q# 9	Q# 10	Q# 11	Q# 12	Q# 13	Total
Par #1	1		5	4	1	1	5	4	2	3	26
Par #2	0	0	8	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Par #3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par #4	0	0	1	2	0		0	0	0	0	3
Par #5	0	0	9	4	0	9	8	0	6	7	43
Par # 6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	99
Par # 9											
Par # 12	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Par # 14	0	0	7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Par # 16	0	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	25
Total	10	15	45	37	15	24	18	10	16	16	

When taking all ten questions into consideration, in survey one and survey two, the total

for each participant would reflect a neutral Likert score, except for participant three and

participant six. Participant four strongly disagreed with having been abused and is not a

member of the church but an employee. Participant six strongly agreed with being abused

and has been a church member for fifteen years. However, in survey one and survey two

questions, number five, number seven and number ten, had the highest scores with

question number five having the highest score. These scores were in response to the

following items: Question number five – Yes, a church leader has abused me; Question

number seven – I have been verbally abused by someone in the ministry; and Question

number ten – I have been emotionally abused by religious experience.

Table 4. Pre-survey, highest abuse question scores

	Q #5	Q #7	Q #10	Total
Par #1	8	9	9	26
Par #2	8	10	8	26
Par #3	8	0	0	8
Par #4	0	0	0	0
Par #5	5	5	6	16
Par # 6	8	10	9	27
Par # 9	0	0	1	1
Par # 12	4	5	8	17
Par # 14	5	8	0	13
Par # 16	5	0	0	5
Total	51	47	41	

Table 5. Post-survey, highest abuse question scores

	Q #5	Q #7	Q #10	Total
Par #1	5	4	5	14
Par #2	8	10	0	18
Par #3	0	0	0	0
Par #4	1	2	0	3
Par #5	9	4	8	21
Par # 6	10	10	10	30
Par # 9				0
Par # 12	5	0	0	5
Par # 14	7	6	0	13
Par # 16	5	5	0	10
Total	45	37	18	

When the survey was issued a second time, participants one, two, three, twelve and

fourteen dropped significantly in the overall scoring. Participants five and six scores were

approximately the same, and participant sixteen scores increased. When these three

questions are singled out in the survey, it is conclusive that some members involved in

the research have experience church abuse, both verbally and emotionally.

Table 6. Pre-survey results, Impact on my relationship with God

	Q# 3	Q# 6	Q# 14	Q# 15	Q# 17	Q# 22	Total
Par #1	1	4	4	3	4	3	19
Par #2		1	1	1	1	1	5
Par #3	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Par #4	0		0	0	0	0	0
Par #5	0	3	1	1	1	1	7
Par # 6	10	10	4	10	10	10	54
Par # 9		0	0	0	0	0	0
Par # 12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par # 14	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Par # 16	5	0	0	2	0	0	7
Total	22	19	11	18	17	15	

Table 7. Post-survey results, Impact on my relationship with God

	Q# 3	Q# 6	Q# 14	Q# 15	Q# 17	Q# 22	Total
Par #1	3	1	1	8	5	1	19
Par #2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par #3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par #4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par #5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par # 6	10	10	10	10	9	10	59
Par # 9							
Par # 12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par # 14	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Par # 16	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	23	11	11	18	14	11	

With the exception of participant six, the abuse did not impact their relationship with

God.

Table 8. Pre-survey results, Effect of abuse: depression, stress, etc.

	Q# 4	Q# 16	Q# 18	Q# 19	Q# 20	Q# 21	Total
Par #1	3	8	1	3	1	1	17
Par #2	3	10	1	1	1	1	17
Par #3	8	10	1	5	0	6	30
Par #4	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Par #5	4	8	1	7	7	1	28
Par # 6	10	10	10	10	5	10	55
Par # 9	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Par # 12	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Par # 14	3	9	0	0	0	0	12
Par # 16	2	10	0	0	0	0	12
Total	39	67	14	26	14	19	

Table 9. Post-survey results, Effect of abuse: depression, stress, etc.

	Q# 4	Q# 16	Q# 18	Q# 19	Q# 20	Q# 21	Total
Par #1	6	8	1	6	4	1	26
Par #2	0	10	0	0	0	0	10
Par #3	0	10	0	0	0	0	10
Par #4	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
Par #5	5	8	0	6	1	0	20
Par # 6	10	10	10	10	10	6	56
Par # 9							
Par # 12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Par # 14	0	10	0	0	0	0	10
Par # 16	1	7	0	0	0	0	8
Total	22	70	11	22	26	7	

Except for participant six, the abuse did not have a physical or emotional effect.

However, in survey one and survey two question number sixteen had the highest score

and question number four dropped significantly. These questions were: question number

four – I believe most Christians are hypocrites and question number sixteen – There is

more to life than I'm experiencing. Of note, question number sixteen suggests a lack of

fulfillment which may have nothing to do with effects of spiritual abuse and more to do

with complacency.

Spiritual Abuse and Healthy Congregation Questionnaire

After session two, the Spiritual Abuse and Healthy Congregation Questionnaire was administered as a test data collection method to assess knowledge acquired. The exact responses of each participant have been captured below.

Table 10. What is spiritual abuse?

What is Spiritual Abuse?
Par #1: When something is said and it's not Christ like
Par #2: Spiritual abuse is when someone mistreats you through the church. Power of who they are or position in the church
Par #3: To boss, loud talking people, it's about me nobody else, my program idea
Par #4: Spiritual abuse is a set up to fall and / or fail
Par #5: When someone brings their sinful ways into the church. They then convince others to participate in deceiving the church, and rob God of what he demands of them.
Par #6: Taking the word that you get on Sunday and not talking about it with someone
Par #9: Not obeying God's words
Par #12: Doing something against the will of God
Par #14: Spiritual abuse is when someone uses their authority in God to control someone else. Someone can also use favor, tithes or influence to control someone else.
Par #16: The act of harming someone emotionally, physically or with words within the church to cause a person actions to not fully interact with others

Of the ten responses received, seven (70%) captured the essence of spiritual abuse. The responses from participants nine and twelve may be construed as a general definition of sin, and participant six response is evangelistic.

Table 11. An example of spiritual abuse

An Example of Spiritual Abuse
Par #1: When a leader wants you to do things their way
Par #2: Over talk you when you are willing to testify about the goodness of God to congregation
Par #3: Being in charge all of the time; no one else is never right
Par #4: A leader demeans a member and makes him feel worthless or embarrassed or in some way not good enough
Par #5: When officers of the church convince others to withhold tithes from the church. This puts hardship on the church. These are well educated individuals that most look up to. Then you also have those who because a person has had down falls in life to be talked to as though they are less than.
Par #6: I don't know what it is
Par #9: When we let the devil and others get into your life
Par #12: Doing something wrong to a person by thought, word or deed
Par #14: An example of spiritual abuse is when members withhold tithes to protest decisions made by pastor.
Par #16: Not giving wisdom or knowledge to a person and then criticizing them for the outcome

Of the ten responses received, eight (80%) gave an accurate example of spiritual abuse.

Participants six admitted not knowing an example. Participant nine generalized spiritual

abuse as the influence of others and the devil.

Table 12. What is a healthy church congregation?

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
Par #1: When you can come to Sunday School, Bible Study or Prayer Meeting
Par #2: When need to see Jesus in all of us to treat each other with love
Par #3: All being on the same page for the building of God's kingdom
Par #4: A healthy church congregation is encouraging
Par #5: When we all come together to praise the LORD on one accord. Following his commandments to the best of our ability, at all times. Sharing the word, and caring for the unbelievers.
Par #6: Being on one accord
Par #9: Loving God
Par #12: When you can have a honest and truthful relationship with your church members
Par #14: A healthy church is when the pastor leads the church by setting a good example of Christian love and where the members follow in Christian love. Pastor and members both are concerned with praising and worshipping God.
Par #16: One that not always agrees but works together to grow and worship

All ten participants gave an ideal description. The intent of participant one response was to come to church services without being bothered. Participant sixteen response was realistic because it acknowledged that disagreements would come up but the healthy congregation willingly works through them.

Table 13. An example of a healthy church congregation

An Example of a Healthy Church Congregation
Par #1: Meeting the standard of a good church member, and doing things to make your church better.
Par #2: Respect for each other. Love one another in Christ and be willing to show Jesus is us to others
Par #3: Showing loving care for each other
Par #4: A group of believers who encourage each other to always seek God's guidance. They empower each other to do and be the best they can.
Par #5: When we as members come to realize that no matter our education level, admit we don't know it all. Be willing to do whatever it takes to be more Christ like. Prayer – Praise – Worship – Sharing
Par #6: I have never seen a healthy church congregation
Par #9: Becoming one in Christ
Par #12: When someone do you wrong, go to them and discuss it with them.
Par #14: An example of a healthy congregation is one that loves God and each other; one that reaches out in the community to share that love.

Participant sixteen did not provide an example and participant six admitted never seeing a

healthy church congregation. The remaining eight (80%) answers were acceptable

because the responses were consistent with characteristics of a healthy church

congregation.

Forgiveness Exercise

After session three, the forgiveness exercise was administered to qualitatively

capture the participant's personal responses and reactions. The exact responses of each

participant have been recorded along with the assessment. Participant twelve did not

return the form.

Table 14. In what ways you have kept yourself on the hook with your trauma (spiritual abuse)?

In what ways have you kept yourself on the hook with your trauma (spiritual abuse)?
Par #1: Well I kept letting it take control over me. I guess keep dwelling on the situation.
Par #2: I haven't kept myself on the hook and moved on.
Par #3: I ask God to help me through it. He did and I moved on; put it behind me.
Par #4: I'm different. I always have been. I consciously choose to be happy. I don't mean that things are all well or even that possible consistently treat me well. I mean that I really choose to be happy – not on the hook.   I'm related to some "mean" women. (They've gone on to glory now.) When I was young my Dad told me that I didn't have to be "mean." I was a little girl and didn't really understand what he was saying, but he planted that seed nonetheless. Now, because of the hedge (my Mom and Dad) I previously mentioned, I was shielded from a lot of fiery darts, at least, until I was able to "stand" (on the Solid Rock) on my own.   A while ago (about thirty years), I went to play at a church for some afternoon program. When I met the Pastor, he touched me inappropriately. Because I could "stand," I confronted him immediately (probably using that "meanness" my Dad was talking about), demanded promised payment (or I would have conversation with the waiting congregation), and left without playing.   I know that situations happen in the guise of "religion." But I really do choose not to play that game. I am conscience, though, that my straight arrow speech can be construed as "mean," even though I NEVER intend for it to be. I'm really grateful when bring offense to my attention and I'm given an opportunity to apologize and try to make things right.
Par #5: Prayer – Study – Praise - Worship.
Par #6: By going to the same places; doing the same things; lying
Par #9: The pain of my betrayal runs very deep. My first instinct is to hold on to the pain and the hurt. At times, I feel as if I am not doing good in God's eyes because of a sin.
Par #12
Par #14: I have kept myself on the hook with my trauma (spiritual abuse) by not "letting go and letting God" and by not revoking the thoughts of the past abuse when they enter my mind. Dwelling on these things just dredge up old wounds and lead to bad/sinful behavior on my part.

Par #16: By not expressing my true feelings and listening to the person, but not truly having concern about the situation because I knew there was more to it than being told. I felt like it was self-serving for them to express it to me when I wasn't involved.

Four of the participants (Numbers one, six, nine and fourteen) indicated they tended to dwell on the abuse rather than releasing it. Two of the participants (numbers three and five) asked God for help or used church rituals as a way to remedy the abuse. The remaining three (numbers two, four and sixteen) expressed they continued to move forward and let the trauma stay in the past.

Table 15. What is your life like when you hold onto your suffering as proof of your trauma?

What is your life like when you hold onto your suffering as proof of your trauma?
Par #1: To me a whole lot of chaos in my life.
Par #2: I don't hold on to it. And ask for God's help to get over it.
Par #3: Miserable
Par #4: I imagine it would be "hell" – filled with misery. Really – I choose not to be miserable. For real, when I encounter difficulty, I will either "accept" it or "change" it. I've been doing this for a long time.
Par #5: Pain- Mental, Physical, etc.
Par #6: It takes me back to the world of the drugs
Par #9: Dull and empty. It can prevent you from feeling the true grace of God.
Par #12
Par #14: When I hold onto my suffering as proof of my trauma, my life is one of unforgiveness and loneliness. By holding onto the suffering, I'm holding onto the pain and not allowing myself to live a full life. It hinders my fellowship with others and makes me a slave to my misery and anger.
Par #16: I believe it prevents you from being able to say you know you are trying to live a righteous life because you know you are not handling it the way you should yet you do it your way.

Six of the participants (Numbers one, three, five, six, nine and fourteen) described their

life as chaotic, miserable, painful, and lonely when they hold onto the suffering. Two

participants (Numbers two and four) remained they moved past the trauma and one

participant's (Number sixteen) answer was generic and impersonal.

Table 16. What would be possible if you let go of the burden of suffering?

What would be possible if you let go of the burden of suffering?
Par #1: My life would be so much better putting things behind me and pray and just be strong in my everyday walk with God.
Par #2: Freedom
Par #3: Peace of mind
Par #4: EVERYTHING!!!!! HALLELUJAH!!!! All that the Lord would have for me (and I know that)!!!! I want my walk to mirror my talk – regardless of who's watching (or not).
Par #5: Peace of mind, knowing God got my Back.
Par #6:
Par #9: Finding joy in life; being happy with myself. If I will remember God doesn't see my sin as a child of His, it can help renew my spirit.
Par #12
Par #14: If I let go of my burden of suffering, I could experience joy to a greater degree. I believe that by forgiving the offender and "getting over it/myself," I will free myself to have closer relationships with people.
Par #16: You would not struggle internally, and can focus your time and energy on more positive element!

Participant six did not answer the question. The remaining participants described

releasing the burden of suffering would allow them to have a better life. Words used to

illustrate their point were freedom, peace, and joy. The responses suggested a more

positive outlook on life.

Spiritual Narratives

Spiritual narratives were used as another qualitative measurement. Each

participant was asked the same four questions and their respective responses were

transcribed and reflected below.

Participant Number One

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

   Number One - Well when I was appointed to a certain Board in the church, the members made you feel so good about being on the board but then you started hearing things among themselves about me. They never knew I heard them but I walked up on them and it wasn't nice at all. But I put it behind me and let God handle it. They came to me and apologized.

   Number Two - When a letter was written about my family it was hard saying that the [family name] family got special treatment and other members were like nobody. I had to pray again, and I feel all members in the church were treated the same. That's my strong opinion.

   Number Three - This is what hit me the hardest when my [name scratched out] looked at me one day when our summer program was going on and I was sitting in the back asked me had I called my ride. I replied yes then looked at me again and said you are nothing but an instigator. I came home and looked up the word and said oh my God. I said how could this be. I never did anything for this to be and what really hurt me was another leader was right there when it was said. I had never been so hurt and belittled in all my life. I cried that whole week, but I said I got to keep working for my God. I cannot let Him down. How could I serve God, if I keep up mess. That is not me and never will be.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

   I answered no because it has made me so strong in my everyday life because God is [the reason I am] the person I am today. I didn't want to give up on God because He didn't give up on me.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave
   No because I still come to church. I give all my to time to my church through the week and especially on Sunday. I use my talent – still singing in the choir –

giving God all the praises and I still pay my tithes, and I being a Christian would never give up on my church or God.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

    It was a struggle but I prayed day in and out and I asked myself God please make me stronger, and He did, and I have put those things behind me.

Participant Number Two

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    I have experienced abuse over the years. Pastor and I got off on the wrong foot. My spirit was crushed because the pastor stopped me from testifying. I also feel like an outsider because I am outside the church clique. I've pushed my way to be a part and to contribute. I feel that members don't help each other to grow.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

    It has made my relationship better with God – made me closer to God. I read and study the Bible more and even started a Bible study in my home on Friday nights.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

    No.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

    Recovered through prayer

Participant Number Three
1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    We had a pastor – no one was right. He was the only one right.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

    No

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

I started to leave but I didn't

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

With prayer and God's help I stayed

Participant Number Four

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

A park is across the street from my home church. Neighborhood children played (still do) there all the time. One Sunday morning, a little girl came in the basement (where we had Sunday School). One of the teachers stopped her and asked if that was all she had to wear to church? And if she was coming to church, she needed to dress better than that. I was about six or seven years old when this happened. I'm not sure if the girl actually stayed in church, but I remember this interchange, vividly.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

Most definitely!

I'm thankful that I have always been shielded by a hedge of protection. Even though both my parents are gone to Glory, I hear them clearly. When I was a child, my father told me that, "you don't have to be mean."

Almost sixty years later, this incident remains in my memory. I don't' want to be "like" the Sunday School teacher.

I have most definitely grown into a "see/say" person. I "see" you bullying somebody, I WILL "say" something.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

Because I grew up surrounded by the HEDGE and in a time where outside was usually belittling and mean, it was always instilled in me "that's what they say." "They" have no power except what you allow.

There is a considerable peace in knowledge. Actually learning what the Word of God says empowers and assures that we are, indeed, more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

Leaving?

Never!

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

Participant Number Five

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    To listen to members talk about a past pastor and his program decisions, then they act as though you are not in the room while they are talking.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

    It only made me grow closer with God, and ask Him for forgiveness, guidance and understanding.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

    No and Yes. Because of the situations in the church, I wanted or may I say thought of leaving.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

    It was a few years back, so right now I have moved on to trying to be the best I can for the LORD.

Participant Number Six

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    I attended another church, my wife and I had a counseling session and disclosed a lot of personal things to the pastor and the pastor disclosed it to the congregation. The pastor denied telling the congregation and basically told them I was lying. It

was a family church which made it more difficult. I had a close relationship with the pastor but felt betrayed.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

   It did not affect my relationship with God, but it made me question the pastor and his calling from God.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

   My wife and I left the church. It wasn't a place I could continue to worship.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

   I had to move on. I had to forgive him because I would see the pastor out in other places and he would dodge me or walk the other way. I had to realize it was nothing I had done.

Participant Number Nine

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

   When I was asked to come out of choir and told that I couldn't sing. Also told not to help in the kitchen.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

   No it has not. God is my everything. He is real.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

   I love God, He will fight my battle.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

   Yes, God is please with me because I gave the problem to him

Participant Number Twelve

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    A few years ago, the Elder approached my husband because the church could not pay the budget. As a result of all the confusion, my husband and the steward pro-tem were replaced in their position.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

    It did take an effect on me. I felt what the Elder did was wrong and at the time money was more important to him.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

    We did consider leaving, but decided not to. My husband's carpentry talent at the church was greatly affected.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

    I don't know. I look at the Elder differently now. But then again, I look at the people at church and that has renewed my outlook.

Participant Number Fourteen

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

    I felt spiritually abused by the pastor and some members while I was the treasurer. The pastor would ask me to write checks for things that were not approved by the Official Board and when I questioned him, he made me feel that I was disrespecting his position as pastor. The members were critical of me and the Finance Committee and made comments such as "You all (Finance Committee) are just letting him walk all over us." Though everyone knew that there were members who weren't financially supporting the Church, they were critical because financial obligations weren't being met. I felt as though I would be disrespectful by defending myself and the rest of the Finance Committee. Most of these members were older members.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

   The perceived abuse made me closer to God. It was a time that I had to put total trust in Him. No matter how bad it got, I always knew that God would deliver me, the pastor, and the church from this situation.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

   The perceived abuse did not affect my support of the church in talent or tithe. However, it greatly affected the time I spent at Church or Church functions, such as Bible study. Even though, I felt closer to God, I did not enjoy attending service. I attended out of habit obligation instead of desire. Because of it, I considered getting off the steward board and the finance committee so I could be free to visit other churches without feeling like I was shirking my responsibilities. I just wanted to be a pew member.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

   I honestly feel that I have recovered. Of course, things are not perfect, but I have grown so much. In retrospect, I see that the pastor was suffering just as much or even more than I was. I'm just thankful that God worked it out.

Participant Number Sixteen

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse

   I have heard members trying to persuade others to take their point of view on situations where they have no idea or detail on what is going on.

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how

   I believe it has. I have to remind myself of where I am at and the reason for being there. So it makes me take an extra effort to stress that we are here to grow closer to God.

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe, other – consider leaving or did leave

   Never, it has made me at times avoid a solo conversation with the individual.

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

Yes, I am open to recovery. I believe it starts with open communication without making the person feel as though you are not judging them.

Data Triangulation

The project's goal was to educate the participants on spiritual abuse and its effects within the church. There were four data collection methods: pre and post survey, "Have I Been Religious Abused?;" Spiritual Abuse /Healthy Congregation Questionnaire; spiritual narratives; and a forgiveness exercise. The data suggests the following findings.

Finding Number One: Participants understand the concept of spiritual abuse.

i.   70% adequately defined spiritual abuse in the Spiritual Abuse and Healthy Congregation Questionnaire, see Table 10. (Test Data Collection Method)

ii. 80% gave an accurate example of spiritual abuse in the Spiritual Abuse and Healthy Congregation Questionnaire, see Table 11. (Test Data Collection Method)

iii. 100% described incidents of spiritual abuse which indicates an adequate understanding in the spiritual narrative (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method).

Finding Number Two: Participants have experienced and, or witness spiritual abuse at the church

i.   Participants one, two, three, six, twelve and fourteen have experienced church abuse, verbally and emotionally, see Table 4. Self-Assessment "Have I Been Religious Abused? (Survey Quantitative Data Collection Method)

ii. Participants one, two, three, five, six, nine and fourteen experienced abuse and participants four, twelve and sixteen have witnessed spiritual abuse. The abuse was described in their spiritual narrative (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method).

iii. Participants one, six, nine and fourteen admitted they held onto the trauma (spiritual abuse) and tended to dwell on the abuse. Participants three and five released the trauma by asking God for help or through church rituals. The remaining three, participants two, four and sixteen stated they moved on and left the trauma in the past. See Table 14 Forgiveness exercise - In what ways have you kept yourself on the hook with your trauma (spiritual abuse)? (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method)

Finding Number Three: Spiritual abuse did not negatively effect their relationship with God

i. Except for participant six, the abuse did not impact their relationship with God, see Tables 6 and 7. Self-Assessment "Have I Been Religious Abused? (Survey Quantitative Data Collection Method)

ii. Participants one, two, three, four, five, six, nine and fourteen stated the abuse allowed them to have a stronger and closer relationship with God. Participants twelve and sixteen reported it had an effect. Participant twelve stated the abuse had an effect because the presiding elder was more concerned about money then doing the right thing. Participant sixteen stated they have to remind themselves of reasons they are at church. Spiritual Narrative (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method)

iii. Spiritual abuse did not affect the support of the church for 50% of the participants, namely one, two, four, nine, and sixteen. Participants three, five and twelve considered leaving the church but did not. Participant fourteen did not enjoy attending church functions, and participant six left their former church. Spiritual narrative (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method)

Finding Number Four: Spiritual abuse did effect the participant

i. Participants one, two, three, five, six, nine, fourteen and sixteen stated they were open to recovery and participants one, two, and three indicated prayer helped them move past the abuse. Participant four did not provide a response. Participant twelve did not know if they were open to recovery. Spiritual Narrative (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method)

ii. Except for participant six, the abuse did not have a physical effect that led to a drinking problem, abuse of prescription drugs, or problem with pornography, see Tables 8 and 9. Question sixteen, "There is more to life than I'm experiencing,"

scored eight or higher among seven out of the ten participants. Self-Assessment "Have I Been Religious Abused? (Survey Quantitative Data Collection Method)

iii. Participants one, three, five, six, nine, and fourteen stated when they held onto the suffering they experienced chaos, pain, unforgiveness, loneliness, emptiness, and anger. Participants two and four did not hold onto to the abuse and participant sixteen response was generalized. See Table 15. Forgiveness exercise - What is your life like when you hold onto your suffering as proof of your trauma? (Testimonial Qualitative Data Collection Method)

Conclusion

Abuse that is a result of a power and control issue is never a comfortable topic to discuss, particularly in an ecclesial environment where people are expected to be loving and supportive. Therefore, when abuse happens it has devastating and lasting effects. This project validated that spiritual abuse did happen in the church and that it was not limited to clergy and church leaders, but even members were abusive towards other members. The majority of the victims increased their prayer life which resulted in a closer walk with God. Some of the victims did consider leaving, however, stayed. It is postulated this is due to the average years of membership being greater than thirty and that they also have family members who attend the church. Perhaps the weight was placed on the participant's ability to endure the abuse versus leaving their family church. Though some participants expressed the abuse did not impact their support of the church, the financial and attendance numbers speak differently upon my arrival at the church two years ago. Facilitating discussions on characteristics of a healthy church congregation and conflict resolution skills proved beneficial. The most beneficial spiritual coping ritual discussed was on the Doctrine of Forgiveness. Exploring the biblical text in Matthew and

concepts of han and dan in Minjung theology were reflected in the participants' answers during the forgiveness exercise.

What proved successful in the seminar was using the biblical text, case studies, and a video to engage the participants. The qualitative data collection method using the open-ended questions during the spiritual narratives and the forgiveness exercise provided more detail information to the researcher and produced greater insight. The qualitative data collections allowed the participants to be more reflective in their answers. The data collection from the Spiritual Abuse and Healthy Congregation Questionnaire also provided more information to assess because the participants wrote out their answers. Maybe the participants either did not take the survey seriously or by the time the second survey was given some participants just rushed through it. Perhaps there were too many questions and perhaps the scope of the questions should be narrowed down.

One limitation of the study was the recruitment of participants. An appeal was made to church leaders in official board meetings and to the congregation on Sunday morning for several weeks. Although the sample size was relatively large for a qualitative study, on the contrary, it was relatively small for a quantitative study. Quantitatively obtaining a larger sample size could offer more meaningful results as it relates to the exploratory associations. In addition to the quantitatively small sample size, it is also important to note that participants primarily held leadership positions and served in different ministries. Moreover, the cross section of participants could have been better. There was a good mixture of church leaders and members; however, there is more than one congregation within the church. The previous pastor removed several members from church leadership positions, and though they attend church, they are not as active and

several still hold grudges. The researcher met with at least two of the individuals who are still angry, and target their emotions at existing church leaders. These individuals expressed they feel they "were weak to allow the previous pastor to walk all over them." At least one of the members shared their dissatisfaction at me for not restoring the church officers that had been previously removed. The challenge moving forward will be to bridge the gap in the congregation by reassuring that all members are needed and wanted to move the church forward.

Conclusively, I was a victim of spiritual abuse and therefore the oppressed must not become the oppressor. The challenge before me is to be mindful that taking corrective action in the church is not abuse and corrective actions must occur to move the church to a healthy space. God has done a miraculous work in the last two years in the church family. This work is evident in ministry, membership attendance, and financial growth. The church morale is on the upswing! In the future, I would like to refine this study into a four to six-week church leadership training module.

APPENDIX A

PROJECT ORIENTATION

FROM PREYING TO PRAYING: EXPOSING THE EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

Participant Orientation

Pre-Course Work

Write Spiritual Narrative
1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse
2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how
3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe; other – consider leaving or did leave
4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you

If participant does not want to write narrative, then a one on one interview will be done by the researcher

Session One, 2 Hour Sessions

What is Spiritual Abuse?
- Devotion
- A Spiritual Abuse Self-Assessment Exercise
- What is spiritual abuse?
  - ➤ Definition, Characteristic, and Bible study on Jeremiah 6:13-15
  - ➤ Case Study Examples, Breakout Groups
  - ➤ Role Playing
- Cycle of Violence
- Impact on the church

Session Two, 2 Hour Sessions

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
- Devotion
- Bible study on 1 Peter 5:1-5
- Attributes of a Healthy Congregation
- Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Session Three, 2 Hour Sessions

Spiritual Abuse Recovery Aids
- Devotion
- Spiritual Coping Rituals
- Truth Telling & Time to Heal
- Storytelling, An effective way to describe the victim's pain
- Relationship Ending, Releasing People

Project Evaluation

1. Spiritual Abuse Self-Assessment Questionnaire, Before & After Training
2. Spiritual Narratives
3. Forgiveness Exercise
4. Spiritual Abuse / Healthy Church Congregation Questionnaire

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

SPIRITUAL NARRATIVES QUESTIONNAIRE

Informed Consent Form for participation in Research Activities

Purpose of the Study

This study intends to provide a better understanding of what spiritual abuse is and discover its impact on the member and the congregation. The premise is education is the *first step* towards prevention, therefore the primary topics that will guide the study are:

- What is spiritual abuse and its impact
- How to identify abusive behavior
- How to Institute preventive and healing measures

The data collected in this study will be used to draw conclusions to help the researcher better understand the impact of spiritual abuse and how the spiritual health of a church may improve.

Subject's Understanding

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the researcher's degree of Doctor of Ministry at United Theological Seminary.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary.

- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use.

- I understand that I will not be identified by name in any aspect of this project or final product.

- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher.

- I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher has been made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this consent form. The Mentor contact information will be made available upon request.

- I understand that the data I will provide are not be used to evaluate my membership.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse repercussions.

- Our discussion will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

- I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Printed Name

_____
Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Printed Name

_____
Date

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age _____

2. Sex (Male or Female)

3. Length of Membership at Historic Ward Chapel AME Church _____

4. Is your family also a member of Historic Ward Chapel AME Church, Yes or No

5. Ministry Area _____

6. Current Officer of the Church, Yes or No, if Yes then role _____

7. Previous Officer of the Church, Yes or No, if Yes then role _____

8. Have you ever left Ward Chapel AME Church, Yes or No

9. If you left Historic Ward Chapel (answered yes to #8), how long were you gone before returning or renewing fellowship _____

   • When you left Historic Ward Chapel, did your family leave also, Yes or No

   • Did your family return or renew fellowship at Historic Ward Chapel, Yes or No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION, I GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR TIME.

Pre-Course Work: Spiritual Narrative

Participant #_____

Definition

"Religious abuse is the mistreatment of a person by someone in a position of spiritual authority, resulting in the diminishing of the person's sense of well-being and growth – both spiritually and emotionally. The spiritual authority is used to manipulate others for personal gain or to achieve a personal agenda, thereby harming that person's walk with God."[1]

Note: The position of spiritual authority is not limited to the pastor.

1. Describe how you have experience or witness spiritual abuse?

2. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your relationship with God and if yes, then how?

3. As a result of the abuse, has it affected your support of the church: time, talent, tithe; other – consider leaving or did leave?

4. Are you open to recovery and what does that look like to you?

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[1] Jack Watts, *Recovering from Religious Abuse*, (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2011), 2.

APPENDIX C

SESSION ONE, WHAT IS SPIRITUAL ABUSE?

HAVE I BEEN RELIGIOUSLY ABUSED? A SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

CASE STUDIES

FROM PREYING TO PRAYING: EXPOSING THE EFFECTS OF
SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

Session One
What Is Spiritual Abuse?

AGENDA

- A Self-Assessment Exercise
- Jeremiah, Biblical Example
- Case Study
- Forms of Violence
- Impact on the Church

Spiritual Abuse, Ministry Model

- Ministry Model is a <u>Psycho-ecclesial</u> Program
- Based on "psychoeducation" a behavioral therapeutic concept. A Psycho-ecclesial program educates to empower. It will help leadership understand what spiritual abuse is and how it negatively affects feelings and behaviors.

Biblical Example, Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 6:13-15
  - Least to Greatest
  - Greed, Unjust gain
  - Everyone Deals Falsely
  - Treated people carelessly
  - Not ashame

- Jeremiah 5:26-31
  - God's indictment
  - No boundaries to evil
  - Blind to their behavior

Biblical Example, Jeremiah - continued

- Abuse of Spiritual Authority
  - Rebellious Behavior
  - Bad Behavior is Ignored
- Covetousness
  - Greedy for Unjust Gain
  - Entrapment

- Deceit
  - Lying Preacher, Lying Laity
  - Prophesy and Deal Falsely

SPIRITUAL ABUSE IS A POWER ISSUE!

- Abuse may come from a group of persons within the congregation: influential families, group of church officers, or tithers use their influence and money to control the pastor and get members to conform.

- Abusive behavior typically manifest when change is introduced. When change is resisted, control tactics are enacted in fear their position and influence might diminish.

Meyer, *The Abuse of Power and Authority: A Believer's Church Perspective*, 89.

WHAT SPIRITUAL ABUSE IS NOT

Spiritual abuse is not when a church leader, given the authority:

- Makes final decisions;
- Confronts a member because of sinful behavior;
- Removes an ineffective leader or removes a leader exhibiting emotional, physical, mental or spiritual problems;
- Disagrees on doctrine; or enforces a standard of conduct.

Johnson and VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, 23.

CASE STUDY, DISCUSSION

1. Describe the spiritual abuse that occurred?
2. Identify any common characteristic (Henke, Spiritual Abuse Profile)
   - Authoritarian, Image Conscious, Suppresses Criticism, Perfectionistic, Other
3. What is the power and control issue?
4. Observations ….

Forms Of VIOLENCE

1. **Structural**
   - Structural violence is not physical abuse but inequalities inherent in social structures (class, gender and bureaucracy) that make some more vulnerable and disadvantaged than others. <u>Example, Church Structure</u>

2. **Symbolic**
   - Symbolic violence is the experience of feeling out of place, anxious, awkward, shamed, stupid and so on because those who experience symbolic violence are both objectively unable to construct appropriate actions

3. **Direct**
   - Physical or Sexual Abuse

Samuel, *Symbolic Violence and Collective Identity: Pierre Bourdieu and the Ethics of Resistance*, 402.

IMPACT ON THE CHURCH & VICTIM

1. Victims may leave the church
   - Rippling effect, others will leave
   - Financial, Ministry and Outreach decline

2. Victims are Confused & Regret for Leaving

3. Oppressed becomes oppressor

4. Dysfunctional Behavior becomes the Norm

Have I Been Religiously Abused?[1]

A Self-Assessment Exercise

Participant # _____

Directions: After reading each statement, simply circle the appropriate number on the ten-point scale. Try not to spend time on any one statement. Choose the first response that comes to your mind. Your gut reaction is usually the best.

1. **I have stopped going to church because someone in the ministry wounded me.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

2. **Although mistreated by someone in the ministry, I still go to church, but I simply go through the motions.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

3. **I believe God is displeased with me for leaving my church.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

4. **I believe most Christians are hypocrites.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

5. **Yes, a church leader has abused me.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

6. **I feel unworthy to pray.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

7. **I have been verbally abused by someone in the ministry.**

   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
   Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

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[1] Jack Watts, *Recovering From Religious Abuse*, (NY, NY: Howard Books, 2011), 2-5.

8. I have been sexually abused by someone in the ministry.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

9. **I have been financially abused by someone in the ministry**.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

10. I have been emotionally abused by religious experience.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

11. I feel a sense of shame around religious people.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

12. I feel used by religious people.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

13. I believe religious people condemn me.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

14. I am angry with God.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

15. I feel unworthy to reach out to God.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

16. There is more to life than I'm experiencing.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

17. I would like to feel closer to God, but I don't believe it's possible.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

18. Life has no meaning.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

19. Sometimes I wonder if I have a drinking problem.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

20. Sometimes I wonder if I abuse prescription drugs.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

21. Sometimes I wonder if I have a problem with pornography.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

22. Sometimes I don't believe God loves me.

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

CASE STUDY
"Abusive Churches: A View From Within"[2]

Pastor Phil was in the stands watching his team participate in a church league softball game. The game was going great, but for some reason Pastor Phil asked the coach to substitute a number of men in the next inning. The coach complied but left the assistant pastor in the game. This evidently infuriated Pastor Phil. According to the (former) coach, "He called me with his bull horn to come to the spectator stands immediately. He was extremely angry and asked me why I had disobeyed him about the substitutions, pointing out that the assistant pastor was still in the game. Without any provocation on my part, Phil was attempting to intimidate me publicly before many people. I was stunned! His outrage continued for the rest of the evening as he attacked me and the team members."

The following week Pastor Phil was unable to attend the ball game, but he gave orders to play the game "backward." That meant the players had to bat left-handed if they were right-handed and vice versa. All field positions were switched so that everyone was playing in an unfamiliar location. Since the pastor couldn't be there, he sent someone with a camera to videotape the whole game to make sure his decree was obeyed. The point of all of this, he said, was to "humble" the team because they were getting too proud from winning so many games. The team members were, in fact, humiliated and embarrassed.

The coach later confronted Pastor Phil and told him that he was shocked and offended by his behavior. "I pointed out that I had always done what he had asked in regard to coaching any teams, and that his sudden outburst of rage toward me was totally uncalled for. His only response was that I did not obey him and therefore was not submissive to him." The coach learned later that most, if not all, of the team members had gone to Pastor Phil and apologized even though they really had nothing to apologize for.

The scene was quite different a few weeks later when television evangelist Paul Crouch and his wife Jan were present to watch their son Matt play ball and to shoot a video spot for their Trinity Broadcasting Network. Pastor Phil was now "Mister Personality," greeting all of the players, cheering them on to victory, calling the play-by-play action while the video cameras rolled, giving "Jesus cheers," and focusing his attention on Jan and Paul Crouch. At the end of the game, he gathered the team members around him, and, ever mindful of the cameras, prayed and thanked Jesus, tears rolling down his face.

Pastor Phil is the unquestioned leader at Set Free Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, California. He likes to present the image of being a "cool" pastor. No jacket and tie for him. Wearing the obligatory sunglasses and earring, he leaps to the platform, his dark hair pulled back into a pony tail, and grabs the microphone. "I want to welcome you to Set Free Christian Fellowship-a place where people who love Jesus come, a place

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[2] Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches that Abuse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 9.

where people who don't know Jesus come, a place where people who want to find out about Jesus come. And it's the place, too, where a few troublemakers come, just to try to stir up trouble. I would point out a few of them right now, but I won't. We'll let God take care of them, amen?"

Then Pastor Phil invites his audience to "get high on Jesus." "Jesus Christ can just bless your brain to bits," he tells us. "Jesus Christ can make you fly. Jesus Christ can totally set you free-this morning."

CASE STUDY:
"Laity Hurting Laity"[3]

One of the other unfortunate quarrels of division in the church is when laity can't get along with laity. Sometimes just like all other levels of hurts this unhealed and unreconciled process most of the time filtered from the outside of the church into the inside. This type of behavior can overflow into the hearts of people hindering the spiritual growth of the individual as well as the church. Such unresolved poison of laity hurting laity can cause a person to leave the church and possibly never go to church again.

Layperson J shared in how she was really hurt by several laypersons in her local church. Layperson J also stated that in certain events she was overwhelmed how laity in the church who she looked up to the would make her feel as though she didn't have the same worth, not welcome and excluded from feeling as though she was a part of the church family. Layperson J struggles with understanding how people can be self-righteous in the midst of their wrongs and it's accepted. Layperson J discovered when she got older that there was much bias, mean cliques and division in the church. Whenever Layperson J leadership program wouldn't be successful instead of other laity genuinely supporting her they would destructively criticize her to other people in the church and in the community.

As a result, Layperson J feel hurt, hesitant to ask others for help, she felt bad and neglected. Because of laypersons' J's love for God and ministry she hasn't allowed the behaviors of other laity to break her walk with God. She stated that she has grown even more because of this shocking episode. She hasn't after about five years confronted these persons but she has forgiven them, still love, speak to them and pray for them even though it still hurts to a certain degree.

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[3] Willie Eugene Marshall, *Putting My Stuff in the Past*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015), 3-4.

APPENDIX D

SESSION TWO, WHAT IS A HEALTHY CHURCH CONGREGATION?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CONGREGATION?

SPIRITUAL ABUSE / HEALTHY CONGREGATION QUESTIONNAIRE

FROM PREYING TO PRAYING: EXPOSING THE EFFECTS OF
SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

Session Two
What Is A Healthy Church Congregation?

AGENDA

- What is Spiritual Abuse? (Video)
- What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
  - 1 Peter 5:1-5, Biblical Example
  - Characteristics of a Healthy Congregation
- Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Bustraan, *Spiritual Abuse - How to Identify It.*

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
1 Peter 5:1-5, Biblical Example

- 1 Peter 5:1
  - Elder

  - Mature Church Leader

  - Official Board

- 1 Peter 5:2-3
  - Shepherd of God's flock

  - Serving as Overseers

  - Examples to the flock

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
1 Peter 5:1-5, Biblical Example

Shepherd's Motives
- A shepherd should lead not because you must but because you are willing.

- A shepherd should not be greedy for money but eager to serve.

- A shepherd should not lord it over those entrusted to you but be examples to the flock.

- Humility, 1 Peter 5:5 … Mutual Respect for One Another

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
1 Peter 5:1-5, Biblical Example

What A Shepherd of God's Flock Should Not Do?

Read and Discuss Ezekiel 34:2-6 in Groups …

What is a Healthy Church Congregation?
Characteristics

- God's Empowering Presence
- God-exalting Worship
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Community
- Loving & Caring Relationships

- Servant Leadership
- Outward Focus
- Administration & Accountability
- Networking
- Stewardship & Generosity

Macchia, *Characteristics of a Healthy Church.*

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

1. Confrontation – the act of coming together face-to-face to resolve an issue.
   - Con means together
   - Fron means face
2. Confrontation is not Retaliation
   - To retaliate is to return punishment
3. Decision: Whether, When, How to Confront

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending* ,16-19.

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Godly Confrontation
   - Proverbs 19:11, Look over one-time versus pattern of behavior

   - Matthew 5:23-24, You can be the offender

   - Matthew 18:15, You can be the offended

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 25.

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Conflict Management Styles

- The Dictator – "Do It My Way"

  A Brother offended is harder to won than a strong city (Proverbs 18:19)

- The Accommodator – "Have It Your Way"

  The Accommodator wants to maintain the relationship at any cost, even at the cost of her own beliefs, values, peace of mind, personal time, or resources

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 29-48.

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Conflict Management Styles, continued

- The Abdicator – "I'll Run Away"

  The Abdicator leaves the church or the ministry and doesn't tell anybody why.

- The Collaborator – "Let's Find a Way"

  The Accommodator wants to maintain the relationship at any cost, even at the cost of her own beliefs, values, peace of mind, personal time, or resources

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 49-63.

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

1. <u>Preparing for the Encounter</u>
   - Avoid being spontaneous, prayer is the best preparation
2. <u>Owning the Problem</u>
   - Impact the problem is having on you
3. <u>Speaking the Right Words</u>
   - Choose your words; tone is important
4. <u>Listening</u>
   - People feel they have been heard & feelings have been validated
5. <u>Negotiating Future Behavior</u>
   - Both agree on what to do in the future if similar problem arises
6. <u>Releasing the Offender</u>
   - Can't happen in your own strength … Need God

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 67-123.

Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation

Group Exercise: 2 Samuel 12:1-15

Make Observations of Prophet Nathan & King David Encounter

Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending*, 67-123.

Characteristics of a Healthy Church[1]

Here are the ten characteristics of a healthy church with a brief descriptor and an accompanying scripture verse. A healthy church is prayerful in all of the following aspects of church life and ministry, is reliant upon God's power and the authority of His word, and values...

1. God's empowering presence
The healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit's direction and empowerment for its daily life and ministry (Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children").

2. God-exalting worship
The healthy church gathers regularly as the local expression of the body of Christ to worship God in ways that engage the heart, mind, soul, and strength of the people (John 4:23, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks").

3. Spiritual disciplines
The healthy church provides training, models, and resources for members of all ages to develop their daily spiritual disciplines (James 3:17, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven if first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere").

4. Learning and growing in community
The healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment (Romans 14:19, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification").

5. A commitment to loving and caring relationships
The healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve (I John 3:16, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers").

6. Servant-leadership development
The healthy church identifies and develops individuals whom God has called and given the gift of leadership and challenges them to become servant-leaders (Ephesians 4:16, "From Him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work").

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[1] Stephen A. Macchia, "Characteristics of a Healthy Church," Leadership Transformation Inc., 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/characteristics-of-a-healthy-church.htm.

7. An outward focus

The healthy church places high priority on communicating the truth of Jesus and demonstrating the love of Jesus to those outside the faith (Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost").

8. Wise administration and accountability

The healthy church utilizes appropriate facilities, equipment, and systems to provide maximum support for the growth and development of its ministries (Luke 16:11, "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?").

9. Networking with the body of Christ

The healthy church reaches out to others in the body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing, learning opportunities, and united celebrations of worship (John 17:23, "May they (the church) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me").

10. Stewardship and generosity

The healthy church teaches its members that they are stewards of their God-given resources and challenges them to sacrificial generosity in sharing with others (2 Corinthians 9:6, "Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously").

SPIRITUAL ABUSE / HEALTHY CONGREGATION QUESTIONNIARE

Participant # _____   **Date**_____

In your own words ….

What is spiritual abuse?

An Example of spiritual abuse?

What is a healthy church congregation?

An example of a healthy church congregation?

APPENDIX E

SESSION THREE, SPIRITUAL ABUSE RECOVERY AIDS

FORGIVENESS EXERCISE

FROM PREYING TO PRAYING: EXPOSING THE EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

Session Three
Spiritual Abuse Recovery Aids

AGENDA

- Review
  - What is Spiritual Abuse?
  - Strategies for Effective Conflict Confrontation
- Spiritual Abuse Recovery Aids
  - Spiritual and Emotional Transitions
  - Recovery from Churches that Abuse
  - Role of Confidants
  - Spiritual Coping Rituals
  - Minjung – Theology of the Oppressed
  - Acceptance
  - Relationship Ending
- Self-Assessment Exercise

Spiritual Abuse Recovery Aids

Spiritual and Emotional Transitions

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN THE MIDST OF PAIN

Faith becomes STRONGER as our relationship with God GROWS by the power of the Holy Spirit

1. Going from a state of grief to a state of comfort
2. Going from a place of suffering to place of healing
3. Going from a condition of disorder to a condition of order
4. Going from a state of dismay and turmoil to state of rest and hope

Orlowski, *Spiritual Abuse Recovery*, 129.

Recovering from Churches That Abuse

1. Acknowledgment of Abuse
2. Find someone who will listen
3. Talk freely
4. Will grieve for the lost year, friends, family, innonence, etc
5. Expect to feel guilt, fear and shame
6. Expect to feel foolish and experience self-doubt
7. Trust again … Trust God again
8. Relax
9. Forgiveness is crucial to RECOVERY

Enroth, *Churches That Abuse*, 65.

Role of Confidants

- Somebody you Trust
- Openly discuss Church Issue
- Safe & Caring Setting
- Mature Christian, Empathize or Someone who has gone through
- Ministers who are sensitive & empathetic
- Pastoral Counseling

Equation:

Support of Others $+$

The Passing of Time $+$

Access to Knowledge

$=$RECOVERY

Orlowski, *Spiritual Abuse Recovery*, 204 – 208.

Spiritual Coping Rituals

1. Prayer / Fasting / Speaking in Tongues

2. Worship: Songs / Clapping / Weeping / Meditating

3. Reading the Sacred Text & Spiritual Books

4. Forgiveness, Matthew 6:12; 14 – 15

5. Doctrine of Forgiveness, Matthew 18:15-17

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is	Forgiveness is not
Letting go of the struggle with trauma	Forgetting about the trauma
Having compassion for painful experiences	Pretending to be okay, dishonoring painful experiences, self-blame
Holding others accountable for their actions resulting in trauma	Condoning other's inappropriate behavior resulting in trauma
Living life in a valued direction	Living life as proof that the trauma occurred
Using pain as empowerment to live life in a valued direction	Using pain as a reason not to engage in valued activity

Follette, Pistorello, Hayes, *Finding Life Beyond Trauma: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Heal from Post-Traumatic Stress and Trauma-Related Problems*, 215.

Minjung Theology, Theology Of The Oppressed

- Korean Theology of Suffering People

- Suffering attributed to:
  - Exploitation
  - Poverty
  - Socio-political oppression
  - Cultural repression

- Suffering is due to others

Younghak, *Three Talks on Minjung Theology.*

Minjung Theology, Theology Of The Oppressed

Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of the total abandonedness ("Why hast thou forsaken me?") …

a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong - all these combined.

Younghak, *Three Talks on Minjung Theology.*

Minjung Theology, Theology Of The Oppressed

Dan seeks to end the cycle of revenge and un-forgiveness of the victim.   The goal is to live out the gospel message as a "daily rejection of revenge and violence, both inward and outward."

Maforo, et. al., *Minjung Theology: United Theological College Contextual Theology Group Presentation*, 24.

Minjung Theology, Theology Of The Oppressed

Han can lead to Sin.

When the victim of han reacts in a revengeful manner it is sin. "The line between han and sin becomes blurred in their action and reaction."

Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 70.

Minjung Theology, Theology Of The Oppressed

Forgiveness as Healing

To recognize forgiveness as healing is also an admission that we cannot heal or forgive ourselves. The source of healing and forgiving is God. Forgiveness as healing recognizes our human limitations. The initiative always belongs to God; the source of healing resides outside of ourselves.

Calian, Christian Faith as Forgiveness, 443.

Storytelling

- Storytelling gives a voice to the victim
- Opportunity to accuse, lament, and challenge
- Allow the *victim & abuser* to tell their story
- Telling & Retelling the story makes the victim feel less powerless
- Being heard is necessary in the journey towards healing and wholeness
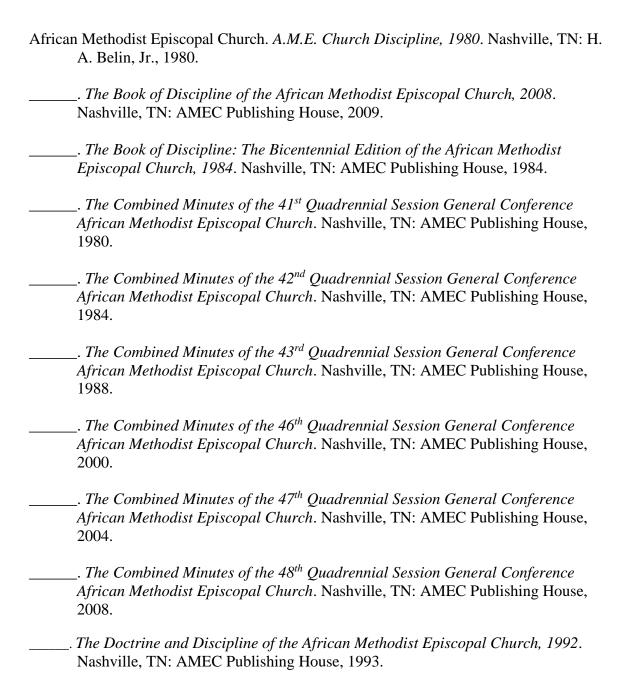
Park, *Minjung Theology*, 10.

Acceptance

Relationship Ending

FORGIVENESS EXERCISE

Participant # _____   Date _____

"A Wonderful fishing metaphor to illustrate how forgiving someone else may sometimes be the only route to forgiving yourself is to think of this as one of those instances you are putting the worm on the hook, but somehow the hook goes through your finger first. In this metaphor, the only way to get your finger unstuck is to let the worm (no pun intended) "off the hook" first (Hayes and Smith 2005)."[1]

Compassionately and honestly check in with your experiences as you answer the following questions.

In what ways have you kept yourself on the hook with your trauma (spiritual abuse)?

What is your life like when you hold onto your suffering as proof of your trauma?

What would be possible if you let go of the burden of suffering?

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[1] Victoria Follette, Jacqueline Pistorello, and Steven C. Hayes*, Finding Life Beyond Trauma: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Heal from Post-Traumatic Stress and Trauma-Related Problems* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2007), 216.

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